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THE AUTHORITY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS



RECENTLY Pope Pius XII, in the Encyclical *Humani Generis* of August 12, 1950 and in an Allocution delivered on September 17 of the same year and directed to those at the Third International Thomistic Congress held in Rome, seriously and repeatedly warned Catholic theologians and philosophers to abandon the vagaries of novel theology and philosophy infected with materialism, historicism, immanentism and existentialism. They were to direct their attention to the safe and sound doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas in which salvation and truth are found.

Pius X had done the same when Modernism became strong, especially in the Encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis* of September 8, 1907. Likewise, Leo XIII, in an effort to turn the human mind from the errors of pantheism, rationalism, ontologism and extreme traditionalism, against which the Vatican Council had taken action, considered that there was no better

remedy at hand than to devote all his powers to restore, nurture, prescribe and urge the doctrine of the Angelic Master. For that reason he issued the Encyclical *Aeterni Patris* on August 4, 1879, as well as many other documents.

From this evidence one fact clearly stands out: that in the judgment of the Holy See there is a remarkable force and power in the doctrine of St. Thomas for safeguarding faith and reason against the multiple deviations which afflict our age.

Just how great this power is and how serious the obligation of adhering to and following the commands and admonitions of the Holy See in this matter is, perhaps, not sufficiently clear to all. For this reason there is an evident need to discuss the doctrinal authority of St. Thomas Aquinas in the fields of philosophy and theology, together with the obligation which binds Catholic philosophers and theologians by precept of the Holy See to embrace and follow his authority.

In order that we may proceed without ambiguity in a matter of such moment, we must above all keep in view what strictly touches on our discussion, namely, the twin distinction of doctrinal authority. One aspect deals with the object or matter, and the other with the mode or form.

On the part of the *matter* there is one authority in *philosophical* science or in the order of truths which man can know by reason. There is another authority in *theological* science or in the order of truths exceeding the natural powers of human reason. This latter order of truth cannot be known unless it is revealed by God and accepted by faith.

On the part of the *form* the authority in each science, whether philosophical or theological, is twofold. One is intrinsic or *scientific* and is measured by the internal mental stature of the writer and the intrinsic doctrinal validity of his work. The other authority is extrinsic or *canonical* and is measured in a particular way by the approbation and commendation of the Teaching Church. We omit that merely human extrinsic authority which depends upon the evaluation of learned men.

Such canonical or ecclesiastical authority of St. Thomas or

of any other writer in the philosophical field should not be considered incongruous. For just as the power of the Church touches directly only spiritual things, but indirectly temporal things by reason of the spiritual, so the Teaching Authority of the Church indirectly and by way of consequence extends to philosophical science, though primarily and directly it is concerned only with supernatural and theological truths. As Pius XII explains:

Assuredly it is her task [the Teaching Authority of the Church] by divine institution, not only to protect and interpret the deposit of divinely revealed truth, but also to keep watch over the philosophical sciences themselves in order that Catholic dogmas may suffer no harm from erroneous opinions.¹

I

SCIENTIFIC AUTHORITY OF THE DOCTOR

1. *In Philosophical Science*

In speaking of the *intrinsic philosophical* authority of St. Thomas, beyond doubt we must note the following. The intrinsic doctrinal authority of any philosopher rests in its entirety on a double basis: the *person* or personal qualities which befit a good philosopher; and his *works*, in that they give evidence that his teaching is perennially true and unassailably valid.

Both of these apply perfectly to Aquinas. First, he possessed an abundance of all the personal qualities requisite for a good philosopher: a razor-keen mind, vivid memory, tireless effort, profound learning, purposeful diligence, purity of life, the cultivation and love of truth alone; there is no doubt that nature “wonderfully endowed him to be a philosopher,” as Pius XI declared.²

There was no philosophical school known at that time, or indeed which possibly could be known, in whose philosophy he was not completely skilled. He fully understood the Greeks,

¹ Encyclical *Humani Generis*, AAS 42 (1950), 575.

² Encyclical *Studiorum Ducem*, June 29, 1923, AAS 15 (1923), 318.

Latins, Jews, Arabs; yet at the same time he treated them with gentleness and understanding. He clearly saw that, as he himself said, "the study of philosophy is directed not at knowing what men have thought, but at knowing *what is actually the truth of things*."³ He adds: "to know what you may wish or understand does not belong to the perfection of my intellect, but only to know the truth in reality."⁴

He was accustomed to read everything with a mind undisturbed and free of prejudice, so as to capture even the smallest spark of truth. He warns us, "in choosing or rejecting opinions one should not be influenced by love or hatred for the one presenting the opinion, but rather *by the certitude of truth*";⁵ and again he says, "do not heed by whom a thing is said, but rather *what is said that is good, you should commit to your memory*."⁶

His pure life gave rise to a sort of natural necessity of uncovering and eagerly grasping the truth, especially of the moral order, as if by instinct. He himself says, "One who has the habit of virtue judges rightly concerning those things which should be done according to the virtue, insofar as he has an inclination towards it." For example, "in a matter pertaining to chastity . . . that person will judge correctly . . . who has the habit of chastity."⁷ In these matters that other axiom of Thomas holds true, "Life holds a priority over doctrine, for life leads to knowledge of the truth."⁸

He was possessed of the greatest skill, coupled with a wonderful sense of balance and proportion, for learning and research, reading and meditation, experimentation and abstraction, inductive and deductive reasoning, speculative and practical activity, as well as in the use of analyzing or synthesizing.

This array of perfections flowed even into his works. He

³ *Commentarium in I de Caelo et Mundo*, Lect. 22, n. 8.

⁴ *Summa Theol.*, I, q. 107, a. 2.

⁵ *Commentaria in libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, Lib. XII, lect. 9, n. 2566.

⁶ *De modo studendi*, ed. Th. Esser, 18. Vienna, 1882.

⁷ *Summa Theol.*, I, q. 1, a. 6 ad 3; II-II, q. 45, a. 2.

⁸ *Comment. in Matthaeum*, cap. 5, n. 4 in fine. Ed. Marietti, 1912, p. 81a.

gathered to himself alone as into a sea, the streams of truth running through the philosophers and ecclesiastical writers. These he assimilated and purified. Their doctrines, to use the words of Leo XIII, "like the scattered limbs of a body, Thomas gathered together and arranged; he disposed them in wonderful order and increased them with mighty additions."⁹

He published learned commentaries on the chief works of Aristotle, based on a new and accurate translation with which his fellow Dominican, William of Moerbeke, supplied him: Aristotle's Logic, Natural Philosophy, Psychology, Metaphysics and Ethics.

He was thoroughly versed in the substance of the doctrines of Plato and the neo-Platonists based not only upon the references in Aristotle, Cicero and St. Augustine but also upon a reading of the actual texts, for he had in his possession Plato's *Timaeus* with its commentary by Proclus. This fact comes to light from a letter written by the Faculty of Arts of the University of Paris to the General Chapter of the Order of Preachers dated May 2, 1274.¹⁰ He also wrote clear and penetrating commentaries on the neo-Platonists Denis, Proclus, and Boethius on the works *De divinis nominibus*, *De causis*, *De hebdomadibus*.

In writing these works he made use of the previous Greek and Arab commentators such as Alexander, Ammonius, Porphyry, Themistius, Philipon, Simplicius, Eustratius, Avicenna, and Averroes. He had their works before him and subjected them to a critical examination with the result that he surpassed each and everyone in explaining Aristotle. "It was for this reason," says Louis of Valladolid, "that philosophers called him *Expositor par excellence*."¹¹

These commentaries on the works of Plato and Aristotle were not made from a merely philological or historical point of view, such as recent writers often adopt. Rather his commentaries were literal and doctrinal, though at the same time the phi-

⁹ Encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, Acta Leonis XIII, ed. Bonne Presse, s. d., I, 62.

¹⁰ *Fontes vitae S. Thomae*, ed. H. Laurent, 584.

¹¹ *Brevis historia Conventus Parisiensis Ord. Praed.*, ed. Martène et Durand, "Veterum scriptorum et monumentorum amplissima collectio," VI, 561.

lological, critical and historical aspects such as could be developed at that time were not neglected. If for this reason any accidental and entirely secondary defects crept in, they were restricted and fully compensated by his almost unbelievably complete knowledge of all the works of all the authors he was explaining. To this he added an incredible shrewdness in searching out, examining and detecting the more obscure meanings of the same authors. So well did he assimilate the force, spirit and mind of these philosophers that one might say their very souls had, as it were, transmigrated into that of their commentator; as though, through the exposition of Thomas, one were hearing the authors themselves speaking.

Moreover, he refined their doctrine in a variety of ways, in that he not only exposed their literal meaning but their intent as well. Into their principles he put order, into their arguments he put clarity and more profound conclusions. He corrected their errors and rephrased their inaccurate statements so as to bring out the proper sense. He enriched their doctrine with so many additions that, being compelled to betray themselves at the hand of an interpreter, they seemed to put on and be redolent of Philosophy itself.

It was Thomas alone who truly surpassed them, in that he delineated, in their philosophical efforts and in the fragments of truth which they found, the person of Philosophy, as it were, and imbibed the whole truth in full draughts.

In addition he wrote many original works. Among the minor works are: *De ente et essentia*, *De principiis naturae*, *De natura materiae*, *De principio individuationis*, *De natura generis*, *De quatuor oppositis*, *De natura verbi intellectus*, *De unitate intellectus*, *De substantiis separatis*, *De regimine principum*. Among his major works are his Disputed Questions *De veritate*, *De anima*, *De spiritualibus creaturis*, and the first three books of the *Summa contra Gentiles*. In these, especially the *Contra Gentiles*, the human faculty of reasoning seems to have reached its supreme height.

Apropos of this Leo XIII said:

There is no part of philosophy which he did not handle with acuteness and solidity. He so investigated the laws of reasoning, God and incorporeal substances, man and other sensible things, human acts and their principles, that the full selection of subjects, a beautiful arrangement of their divisions, his excellent plan of procedure, the soundness of his principles and the force of his arguments, his perspicuity and propriety of expression, his facility for explaining the most abstruse questions leave nothing to be desired.¹²

In fact, as is evident in preserved fragments of the autograph of the *Contra Gentiles*, St. Thomas expended the greatest effort and care upon his work, subjecting his manuscript to the most exacting criticism three or four times. He used to revise words, phrases, arguments and whole chapters. He made corrections and changes and polished his work in order to produce it in the most accurate style and order.

On the other hand, he presented arguments so solid and full, so clear and suitably arranged as to reveal the truth and overcome error, that for true philosophers down through the centuries he offers a lasting and inexhaustible armory of weapons for revealing and protecting the truth against every attack from its enemies.

Leo XIII aptly stated:

It also happened that the Angelic Doctor, in his speculations, drew certain philosophical conclusions as to reasons and principles of created things. These conclusions have the very widest reach, and contain, as it were, in their bosom the seeds of truths well nigh infinite in number. These have to be unfolded with most abundant fruits in their own time by the teachers who come after him. As he used his method of philosophizing, not only in teaching the truth, but also in refuting error, he has gained this prerogative for himself. With his own hand he vanquished all errors of ancient times; and still he supplies an armory of weapons which brings us certain victory in the conflict with falsehoods ever springing up in the course of years.¹³

For this reason the famous Cardinal Francisco Toledo, S. J.,

¹² *Aeterni Patris*, loc. cit.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 62, 64.

with the advice and approbation of philosophers from every country, wrote:

Thomas has within himself the likeness of all in whom there is any precision of interpretation, weight of doctrine coupled with piety, wide, varied and solid learning and an incredible method for the thorough treatment of whole disciplines. It was not merely because of his Commentaries on Aristotle, but much more by reason of his *Summa Theologiae*, *Summa contra Gentiles*, *Quaestiones Disputatae*, and other writings that he alone gave as much light to Philosophy, to say nothing of Theology, as all the others put together. I believe that it would not at all detract from their excellence if I were to say of Thomas that which each of them would say if he were living and present.¹⁴

The philosophical doctrine of St. Thomas, that is, the spirit of his system and its major propositions, cannot be called Platonic or Aristotelian or the offshoot of any other school. Rather it is thoroughly Christian and human in that it gives evidence of an organization of truths and principles towards which the human mind, naturally Christian, is inclined by nature. There is no system of philosophy which is so much a part of and conformable to nature, and at the same time so capable of perfecting the human mind as the philosophical system of Aquinas. Simple, pure, clear, brief, ordered, beginning with ideas and principles *per se* known, it proceeds by natural steps, as it were, to higher, more profound and hidden truths. Step by step it ascends to the supreme pinnacle and ultimate causes of things. With these well in mind it again returns to the things of the sensible order, weighing and explaining them with the judgment of wisdom. The famous series of twenty-four theses reveal this same order. These propositions, in the judgment of the Sacred Congregation of Studies, March 7, 1916, truly contain the essence of the philosophical doctrine of St. Thomas, in its principles and major propositions.¹⁵

These principles and many others of the same kind, especially

¹⁴ *Commentaria una cum Quaestionibus in Octo libros Aristotelis "de Physica Auscultatione,"* Ad lectorem, fol. 2 v., Venice, 1578.

¹⁵ AAS 8 (1916), 157.

those proper to metaphysics, will never perish as long as nature remains, nor will they age with the passage of centuries, but with perpetual vigor will endure forever. As Pius XI wisely pointed out, these principles are not subjective and artificial, but natural and objective constructs, and therefore will last forever.¹⁶

The portions of St. Thomas' doctrine directly touching sensible phenomena, as well as the method of treatment used to explain them, do not constitute the substance of Thomistic philosophy. These are entirely accidental and change in accordance with the day-by-day development of the experimental sciences. Abstracting from such portions and method, his superstructure of metaphysics remains integral and sound.

The consistency and unity of truth we find most clearly in the system of philosophical doctrine of St. Thomas. Particularly in his metaphysics, psychology, and natural ethics his doctrine shows a wonderful harmony with divinely revealed truths.

Whether we consider St. Thomas' philosophical system in itself, or with regard to supernatural truths accepted on divine faith, or in his method of investigation and teaching, or his succinct, sound, clear and energetic manner of explanation, we must declare that it possesses the greatest worth and efficacy and thus the highest scientific authority.

2. *In Theological Science*

St. Thomas' *intrinsic* and *scientific theological* authority is likewise great, both in regard to St. Thomas himself and his doctrine.

His *personal* gifts of nature and grace wonderfully equipped him to grasp and expound Sacred Theology accurately and completely. He was fully versed in all the sources of Sacred Doctrine,—the Scriptures, Tradition, the Councils and Decrees

¹⁶ "Non verrà mai meno il valore della dottrina tomistica, perchè bisognerebbe che venisse meno il valore delle cose." Allocution to university students, Feb. 1927, in M. Cordovani, "San Tommaso nella parola di Pio XI," *Angelicum*, 6 (1929), 10.

of the Teaching Church, the writings of the Latin and Greek Church Fathers and Doctors. He received their references to the word of God with great faith and piety, and sounded their depths through the gift of wisdom to such an extent that he was frequently rapt in contemplation of the divine mysteries. Thus, in a vital manner, he intimately penetrated and tasted them.

He wonderfully adapted the natural wisdom with which he was fully equipped, and the skill of his genius, which was destined for divine things, to the examination, illustration and defense of those truths of faith with scientific methodology. This methodology bore both upon the truths he knew naturally by analogy, and upon the connection of the mysteries themselves with man's ultimate end. In this matter, his way was lighted and directed by divine faith and the gift of wisdom. As Pius XI appositely said:

This is the region in which faith is supreme and the science of faith is called Theology. Science of this kind will be all the more perfect in a man in proportion as he is better acquainted with the evidence for faith and has, at the same time, a more fully developed and trained faculty of philosophizing.¹⁷

Leo XIII tells us:

There is needed a use of Philosophy, both perpetual and manifold, in order that Sacred Theology may assume and put on the nature, the habit and character of true science.¹⁸

This being the case, one may assert without boasting that there was never a theologian stronger in faith than Aquinas, one richer in wisdom, better provided with a deeper understanding of philosophy, nor one more dedicated to the study of divine truth. He made his own the words of St. Hilary, "I regard this as the chief task of my life, my obligation to God to see to it *that my every word and meaning bespeaks God.*"¹⁹

¹⁷ *Studiorum Ducem*, loc. cit. 317.

¹⁸ *Aeterni Patris*, loc. cit. 50.

¹⁹ *C. Gentiles*, I, 2.

The following, taken from his own work, exactly corresponds to this axiom:

Since the perfection of man consists in his union with God, *a man should rest in and be attracted to divine things with all his power, as much as he is able*, so that his intellect may be free for contemplation and his reason for the investigation of divine things, according to Psalm 72, v. 28: 'It is good for me to adhere to my God.'²⁰

And again he says, "The human mind ought always to be moved more and more to a knowledge of God, according to the measure that is proper to it," that is, in the highest degree possible.²¹

It should not, then, be considered unusual that his many great perfections flowed into his theological works, nor should there be any doubt, as Pius XI said, "that Aquinas raised Theology to the highest eminence of dignity."²²

He treated every part of theology most skillfully and enriched theology as a whole, lavishing upon it the incredible luxuriance of his genius. He laid solid and lasting foundations for that fundamental part of Theology called *Apologetics*. Succeeding theologians have reared their structure upon the bases he had afforded, such as his distinction between natural and supernatural truth concerning God, the proper qualities of each, the nature of revelation and faith, the possibility and necessity of revelation, the credibility of the mysteries of faith and the motives supporting it. Cajetan, Bañez, Zúmel, Navarrete, Nazarius, John of St. Thomas, and the Salmanticenses developed the principles of Apologetics supplied by Aquinas in learned commentaries on the *Prima Secundae* and the *Secunda Secundae*, where the nature of faith and theology is treated. Through them these principles were made available to later Thomists who brought out special works suited to our times, as Cardinal Zigliara, Fathers Gardeil and Garrigou-Lagrange.

The treatises on the *Church* itself viewed by modern theo-

²⁰ *In Boethii de Trinitate*, q. 2, a. 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, ad 7.

²² *Studiorum Ducem*, loc. cit.

logians as the Mystical Body of Christ, its constitution, qualities and marks, the primacy and infallibility of the Roman Pontiff, the members of the Church, all had St. Thomas as their precursor and to all intents and purposes their creator. He outlined the basic foundations later developed by his famous pupils John of Torquemada, Cajetan, Bañez, Nazarius. Through them his fundamental ideas passed into the modern tracts *de Ecclesia Christi*.

That the theological method, contained especially in his tract *de locis theologicis*, came chiefly from Thomas, is frankly stated by the famous Melchior Cano, founder and parent of this branch of theological science. He says:

As a manifestation of my gratitude I bow to him to whom I owe so much, and I ever admit my lasting indebtedness to him in this task. For my part, *St. Thomas was both author and teacher in the composition of this work*.²³

Even *Dogmatic Theology* “also found in Thomas by far the richest of all commentators.”²⁴ With so much acumen did he treat the nature of God and His attributes, His unity, goodness, perfection, simplicity, infinity, immensity, eternity, incomprehensibility, ineffability, omniscience, beatitude, providence, omnipotence, the mysteries of the divine will and predestination, that he left for succeeding theologians an opportunity to imitate but not to equal or surpass. Clearly and aptly he described the intimate life of God in the Trinity of Persons, as far as that can be done by one not yet in heaven. He delineated with amazing penetration the creation of the world, man, angels, and the elevation of men and angels to the supernatural order, along with the fall of both. He treated also of the divine conservation and direction of all creatures. Never was there a theologian who so subtly penetrated or fully and clearly explained the nature, faculties and operations of human and angelic creatures. In exploring and elucidating the

²³ *De locis theologicis*, lib. XII, cap. 2, no. 2, Melchioris Cani Opera, ed. T. Cucchi (Rome 1900) III, II.

²⁴ *Studiorum Duce*, loc. cit., 318.

mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption, and other mysteries hidden in the life and death of Christ, he appeared to have wrested the honors from other theologians, just as he did in his hymning and explanation of the Sacrament of the Eucharist and in his eschatological questions. When he finished his tract on the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, he received the praise and approbation of the Lord Himself, who said, *Well have you written of Me, Thomas*.²⁵ Indeed, his tract on this Sacrament was “clearly miraculous,” said Benedict XV.²⁶

One must place the same evaluation upon his *Moral Theology* dealing with the direction of human acts to a supernatural end. No ecclesiastical writer, Father or Theologian, so fully, deeply and clearly explained the ultimate end of man, human acts, the passions, the divine law and its precepts, grace, the vices, and the moral and theological virtues.

It was this part of theology which, in the estimation of his contemporaries, Aquinas especially enriched. They called him the “renowned instrument of God in Theology and Philosophy, and especially in Moral Theology.”²⁷ He not only treated the life of the individual as regulated by the moral law, but in addition exposed the principles and doctrine upon which a rich family life must rest, as well as the rights and duties of parents. Likewise he discussed the implications of social life, and the true and safe direction of conduct among nations. All of these he handled from the viewpoint both of nature and of grace. As for his teaching on personal prudence and the prudence of rulers, right and justice, authority and obedience, private property and almsgiving, war and peace, the rights of nations and their mutual obligations, all these were fruitfully developed in later times by Cajetan, Francisco de Vitoria, Dominic de Soto, Bañez, and others, and applied later to the

²⁵ G. de Tocco, *Vita S. Thomae*, cap. 52, ed. D. Prümmer, p. 126.

²⁶ Letter to Fr. Lépiciér, Jan. 10, 1917, *AAS*, 9 (1917), 102.

²⁷ Ptholomaeus de Lucca, “Hist. Eccl.,” lib. XXII, cap. 24, in Mandonnet, *Des écrits authentiques de saint Thomas d’Aquin*, p. 50; *Chronica minor auctore minorita erphordiensi*, “Monumenta Germaniae historica,” *Scriptores*, XXIV, 212.

texture, development and preservation of American law. Even at present his principles are considered to be of profound practical worth and hold a position of respect.

With singular dignity and loftiness of thought he enhanced and advanced *Ascetical* and *Mystical Theology*. Depth, devotion and thoroughness mark from start to finish his treatment of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, the Fruits and the Beatitudes, the Indwelling of the Holy Trinity in the souls of the just, the active and contemplative life, prayer and the mystical states, religious and episcopal perfection, the rewards and effects of burning and ardent charity.

These are his famous words on the verse: *Taste and see that the Lord is sweet* (Ps. 33: 0).

In the material order we first see and then taste; but *in spiritual things one must first taste in order to see, because no one knows who does not taste*. Therefore (the Psalmist) says *first, taste; and then, see*.²⁸

In another place he adds:

We should understand divine things according to this unifying action of grace—not as if divine things were drawn down to the level of our being, but rather our whole being is established above nature in God, with the result that we become totally God-like through his unifying action of grace.²⁹

In his *Exegesis* and *Biblical Theology* he completely and learnedly interpreted Sacred Scripture. First, he firmly established and clearly explained the fundamental principles of this study: its nature, which, as the word of God, has God inspiring it as its principal Author; and the man who is inspired, whom we call the hagiographer, as its instrumental author.³⁰ Further, he explained the nature of inspiration and the light of prophecy;³¹ its truth, in that it is the word of God Who cannot deceive nor be deceived;³² its multiple senses, the equivocal

²⁸ *Comment. in Psalm. 33:9.*

²⁹ *Comment. in Dionysii de Divinis Nominibus*, ch. 7, lect. I.

³⁰ *Quodl. VII*, a. 14, ad 5.

³¹ *Summa Theol.*, II-II, qq. 171-175.

³² *Ibid.*, q. 1, a. 3.

sense and others, proceeding one from the other, but all depending upon the one fundamental literal sense.³³ And finally, he discusses the development of divine revelation in the Old Testament and how it was suited in the manner of its presentation to the cultural conditions of the Jews to whom it was given.³⁴

He commented on the chief books of the Scriptures: Isaias, Jeremias, Job, the Psalter of David in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, besides the *Catena Aurea* on the four Gospels, a work of great learning and incredible labor, in which he collected and ordered with wonderful precision whatever the whole tradition of the Greek and Latin Fathers had brought forth, he wrote special expositions of the Gospels of Matthew and John and all of the Pauline epistles.

In these commentaries, especially on the Gospel of St. John and the Epistles of St. Paul, there is a marvelous fullness of biblical and theological teaching, dogmatic, moral and spiritual. The result is that they form an inexhaustible gold mine for exegetes, theologians, preachers, and for all those who strive for perfection.

St. Thomas' theology, as a complete unit, possesses such dignity that it surpasses every human science in its theoretical aspect and every practical science in the regulation and direction of human action; in its supernatural grasp and tendency it is without peer. As Cardinal Bessarion said, *Among the saints he is the most learned, and among the learned, the most saintly.*³⁵ and for that reason he is the prince of all theologians. What Thomas has said about the perfect theologian fits no other theologian as well as Thomas himself:

The doctrine of Sacred Scripture [and Sacred Theology] has this peculiarity, that its content is not only speculative, as in Geometry, but practical as well, in that it perfects the affections. It is for this reason that Matthew (5:19) says, 'He that shall do and teach, he

³³ *Quodl.* VII, aa. 14-16; *Summa Theol.*, I, q. 1, a. 10.

³⁴ *Summa Theol.*, II-II, q. I, a. 7; I, q. 68, a. 3; q. 70, a. 1 ad 3.

³⁵ *Adversus calumniatorem Platonis*, lib. II, cap. 3.

shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.' In other sciences it is sufficient for a man to be perfect intellectually. In this science one must be perfect not only intellectually but morally as well.³⁶

Such fullness and inherent perfection of St. Thomas' theology is apparent to anyone who reads or studies his many theological works, or to put it briefly, his major and minor works.

His minor works include: *De perfectione vitae spiritualis*, *De duobus praeceptis caritatis et de decem legis praeceptis*, *De articulis fidei et Ecclesiae sacramentis*, *Contra errores graecorum*, *De forma absolutionis*, *De rationibus fidei*, *Compendium Theologiae*, *Expositio in primam et secundam Decretalem*, *In orationem dominicam expositio*, *In salutationem angelicam expositio*, *In symbolum Apostolorum expositio*.

His major works are: *Commentarium super quatuor libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi*, *Quaestiones disputatae et quodlibetales*, (such as *De potentia*, *De unione Verbi Incarnati*, *De malo*, *De virtutibus in communi*, *De sensibus Sacrae Scripturae*) and especially his *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologiae*.

The celebrated words of William of Tocco apply quite accurately to these major works:

Thomas instituted *new* articles in his teaching, discovered a *new* and brilliant method in his presentation, and adduced *new* reasons in support of his arguments. No one who heard him teach *new* things and illustrate doubtful matters with *new* reasons would doubt that God had enlightened him with the rays of a *new* light. So swift and certain in judgment was he, that he did not hesitate to teach and write *new* opinions which God had thought worthy to inspire anew.³⁷

Doubtless, besides his angelic genius fortified with heavenly gifts of nature and grace, the cause of this fresh approach seems to be a profound knowledge of the sources and instruments of theology and a more precise and dextrous application of them. He channeled into the service and utility of theology this fuller

³⁶ *Comment. in Epist. ad Hebraeos*, cap. 5, lect. 2.

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, cap. 14, p. 81.

and more accurate knowledge of Scripture and the tradition of the Fathers, his truer and more penetrating appraisal of reality which stemmed from a more refined and penetrating grasp of philosophy.

Previous theologians, and some of his own time as well, very timidly applied reason and human science to explain theological uncertainties and questions. Such usage was aimed more at literary ornamentation than fuller understanding. But Thomas, following in the footsteps of his beloved master, St. Albert the Great, called upon every human science, and all the powers of reason to be of service, not as masters but as servants, in the defense, illustration and explanation of the faith. For Thomas said, "Since grace does not destroy nature but perfects it, natural reason should minister to the faith, as the natural bent of the will ministers to charity."³⁸

And so Thomas completed the work of renovation and consolidation of divine and human science begun by Albert and brought it to perfection. He established two bodies of doctrine essentially distinct, philosophy and theology. Both enjoy full autonomy in their own field, in such a way that there is not and cannot be any real opposition or contradiction between them. Rather there is marvelous harmony, through their mutual aid and assistance. For reason should be subordinate to faith and serve it as nature serves grace and the creature serves the Creator. So it happened that Theology, without in the slightest abandoning its character as effective knowledge aimed toward piety, as many theologians of his time asserted, assumed at the same time the nature of a precise science, since it is truly and in a full sense the science of faith.

This work of such tremendous volume, fruitfulness and value, for which St. Thomas strenuously labored and spent himself, suffered calumny and persecution while he was living and even after his death. These attacks reached their culmination in the condemnation of several propositions by Stephen Tempier, John Peckham and Robert Kilwardby.³⁹ But, undaunted, he was

³⁸ *Summa Theol.*, I, q. 1, a. 8 ad 2.

³⁹ H. Laurent, *op. cit.*, 596-617.

victorious in every skirmish, and as Pius XI said, "Like gold which no acid can dissolve, so he retained his force and splendor and still retains it."⁴⁰

In witness of this are the words of the professors of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Paris, calling him "morning star preeminent in the world, radiance and light of the age, indeed, we may say, a light greater than the light of day," and by singular privilege given to the world by the Author of nature to illuminate the secrets of nature.⁴¹

We find the same praises in a Lament on the death of Thomas written about the same year.⁴²

His hearers and pupils are of the same mind. He is celebrated by Remigius Girolamus as *Teacher among teachers and saint at summit of perfection*.⁴³

*Doctor doctorum
Sanctusque cacumine morum.*

Ptolemy of Lucca, "Thomas was the ark of Philosophy and Theology."⁴⁴ According to Rambert de Primadizzi of Bologna, "He wrote unexcelled treatises overflowing with truth,"⁴⁵

⁴⁰ *Studiorum ducem, loc. cit.*, 317.

⁴¹ Letter to the Dominican General Chapter, May 2, 1274, H. Laurent, *op. cit.*, 584.

⁴² H. Laurent, *op. cit.*, 586, 587:

Hic ut stella matutina, ut solaris radius,
Verbo, vita et doctrina praeulsit Parisius;
Cura dedit hunc divina, velut iubar clarius
In multis utilius

.....
Gemma morum, flos doctorum, mente vir aethereus,
Fulgens orbis cereus;
Hic pudoris vas decorum, Scripturarum puteus,
Exemplar philosophorum, thronus Regis aureus.
Alumnus Philosophiae, ex Aquino nobilis,
Lucerna Theologiae, scriptis admirabilis,
Explanavit nocte die libros Aristotelis;
Vir cunctis amabilis,
Bonis fuit mentis pia, malisque terribilis.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 589:

⁴⁴ *Op. cit.*, cap. 15.

⁴⁵ *Apologeticum veritatis contra corruptorium*, prol., p. 3, ed. J. P. Müller, Rome 1943.

through whose mouth spoke St. Augustine, Boethius, St. Anselm, Richard of St. Victor and all who had any learning.⁴⁶

Further, they had no hesitation in comparing him to the Fathers, especially to St. Augustine, and to the great Apostle Paul. Blessed James Capocci of Viterbo

believed according to faith and the Holy Ghost that our Savior, the Teacher of truth, for the enlightenment of the world and the Universal Church, had sent Paul the Apostle, and later Augustine, and recently Brother Thomas whom he believed would not be supplanted by one of greater authority even to the end of the world.⁴⁷

Despite the attacks of his rivals, his authority increased and reached such a point that he convinced every mind and allied it to his teaching, and was hailed as the universal master and teacher. As Bartholomew of Capua, who had known him personally testified:

Though after his death the writings of Brother Thomas were impugned by many great men and subjected to the test of sharp criticism, nevertheless his authority never decreased but rather waxed stronger. With reverence and respect it was diffused over the whole earth,⁴⁸

since as Blessed James of Viterbo says:

In his writings are found universal truth, universal clarity, universal enlightenment, and the universal order and doctrine necessary for arriving quickly at perfect understanding.⁴⁹

Stephen de Salanhac, before the year 1278, wrote:

Brother Thomas of Aquin in Apulia is an outstanding doctor, famous throughout the world. He wrote much, and the whole East and West with impartial judgment embraced his safe and clear doctrine. They held it in admiration, rejoiced and gloried in its possession. His doctrine, as a shining light, endures and increases

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, a. 3, p. 24.

⁴⁷ H. Laurent, *op. cit.*, 383, Process of canonization at Naples, testimony of Bartholomew of Capua, no. 83.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 385.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 384.

up until that day when the morning light will rise. *All use him as a source, even his rivals and disparagers, who do so slyly.*⁵⁰

In the succeeding centuries and even up to our own time he has elicited the approbation or at least the admiration of men by his genius and knowledge. This was especially true of the learned and even those not of the faith. If we listen to Erasmus, there was no theologian equal in industry, or more balanced in genius, or more solid in learning.⁵¹ Leibnitz admired the solidity of his doctrine,⁵² Christian von Wolff the keenness of his intelligence,⁵³ James Brucker the excellence of his mind, fullness of his teaching and his tireless industry,⁵⁴ Adolph Harnack the herculean strength of his understanding,⁵⁵ and R. Seerberg salutes Thomas as the greatest of the theologians and philosophers of the Church, who planted on high the standard of progress in philosophy and theology.⁵⁶

Therefore, the intrinsic strength of the doctrine of St. Thomas in philosophy and theology is so great that it is rated the highest not only by his supporters and friends but even by his rivals and his enemies.

II

CANONICAL AUTHORITY OF THE DOCTOR COMMUNIS OF THE CHURCH

This authority which may also be called *dogmatic* corresponds to the conformity of a theological or philosophical doctrine with divine revelation. It is measured by the approbation and

⁵⁰ *Chronica*, cf. Berthier, *Sanctus Thomas Aquinas*, "Doctor Communis" *Ecclesiae*, I, LVI-LVII, Rome, 1914. Cf. also G. de Tocco, *Vita*, cap. 16, ed. Prümmer, 85; Pthol. de Lucca, *Hist. Eccl.*, cap. 8-9, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.* LVII.

⁵¹ "Adnotationes in Epistulam ad Romanos," cap. I, in B. de Rubeis, *Dissertatione criticae in S. Thomam Aquinatem*, dissert. 6, cap. 2, no. 1. *Opera S. Thomae*, ed. leon. I, 115 b.

⁵² *Tentamina Theoliceae*, III, § 330. *Opera*. ed. L. Dutens, I, 358.

⁵³ *Theol. Naturalis*, § 683, p. 242, Verona, 1738.

⁵⁴ *Historia critica Philosophiae*, III, 803. Leipzig, 1743.

⁵⁵ *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, 3, 498. Tübingen, 1910.

⁵⁶ *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, III, 318, Leipzig, 1913.

commendation of the Teaching Authority of the Church whose function it is to judge such conformity. Thus *the weight of this type of authority is wholly derived from the authority of the Church*. As Thomas himself writes:

The teaching of Catholic Doctors has its authority from the Church; for that reason we must rely upon the authority of the Church more than upon the authority of an Augustine, a Jerome, or any other Doctor.⁵⁷

When the authority of the Church consistently and over a long period approves and commends the doctrine of anyone for all the faithful, *it makes that doctrine its own, and invests it with its own authority*. The Church does not create the force and truth of that doctrine out of nothing but rather supposes its existence and recognizes it, authoritatively proposing it to be followed and imitated. The manner of such approbation is similar to that by which the canonization of one of the faithful by the Church does not create but supposes the sanctity of the person. The Church merely recognizes that sanctity, and authoritatively proposes it for veneration and imitation.

Primarily, the Church approves and commends theological doctrine which deals *per se* with divinely revealed truths. But secondarily, it can approve philosophical doctrine, which is properly concerned with truths of the natural order, insofar as that doctrine is in conformity with truths of the supernatural order. For this very reason Benedict XV called it “philosophy according to Christ.”⁵⁸ And so the canonical doctrine of St. Thomas should be treated first in the field of theology and then in philosophy.

1. *In Theology*

John XXII, who canonized St. Thomas, said before the Cardinals in Consistory, when a motion was initiated to begin the process of canonization:

⁵⁷ *Summa Theol.*, II-II, q. 10, a. 12.

⁵⁸ *Motu proprio, Non multo post*, de Romana S. Thomae Academia, AAS 7 (1915), 6, Dec. 31, 1914.

His life was saintly and his doctrine could only be miraculous . . . because *he enlightened the Church more than all the other Doctors*. By the use of his works a man would profit more in one year than if he studied the doctrine of others for his whole life.⁵⁹

At the completion of the process of canonization, when more than 300 miracles performed by St. Thomas had been recounted, the Pontiff said:

Why should we seek more miracles? *He has performed as many miracles as he wrote articles*. Truly this glorious Doctor, after the Apostles and the early Doctors, has greatly enlightened the Church.⁶⁰

Clement VI, in his Apostolic Letter *In Ordine Fratrum Praedicatorum* of Feb. 6, 1344, directed to all the faithful, praised the Order of Preachers for producing:

That famous and fruitful branch, the blessed Thomas of Aquin, outstanding doctor and confessor. The whole Church, gathering many fruits of his spiritual maturity from the writing and teaching of his wisdom and doctrine, is continually refreshed by their aroma.⁶¹

Further, the same Pontiff proclaimed in the Dominican General Chapter held at Brives in 1346, that all the brethren are expressly forbidden even to dare to withdraw from the doctrine of St. Thomas.⁶²

For *Blessed Urban V* the mind of St. Thomas was the “treasury of divine wisdom,” which, with the aid of divine grace, “has unlocked the hidden things of Scripture, solved its puzzles, brought light to its difficulties, and cleared up its questions.”⁶³ And he added, “At Toulouse there is a new university for theology which We wish to be founded on the solid

⁵⁹ *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. I-martii, 681-682.

⁶⁰ P. Percin, *Monumenta Conventus Tolosani Ord. Praed.*, cf. J. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 50.

⁶¹ Cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 55.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 56.

⁶³ Bull *Copiosus*, June 16, 1368, in which he ordered the body and head of St. Thomas to be brought to Toulouse and given to the Friars Preachers, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 63, 65.

and firm doctrine of that saint.”⁶⁴ To the Archbishop of Toulouse and to all the Masters and Doctors of the University he wrote;

We wish, and the purpose of the present letter is, to *enjoin upon you that you follow the doctrine of the Blessed Thomas as the true and Catholic doctrine, and endeavor to spread it with all your power.*⁶⁵

Indeed, as *Nicholas V* said, “By his doctrine the universal Church is enlightened,”⁶⁶ because he, on the word of *Alexander VI*, “as a splendid light, enlightened the Christian world in every respect.”⁶⁷

Pius IV heartily praised the custom of the University of Salamanca for its yearly celebration of his feast, in the Dominican Church of St. Stephen, and granted many indulgences so that great devotion might attend the feast “of such a great Doctor whose doctrine, as everyone knows, brought and daily brings such great fruit to the Church.”⁶⁸ He further invited all to imitate that custom and follow his doctrine.

St. Pius V, who declared him a Doctor of the Universal Church, recognized in Thomas “the most brilliant light of the Church,” whose works are:

the most certain rule of Christian doctrine by which he enlightened the Apostolic Church in answering conclusively numberless errors . . . , which illumination has often been evident in the past and recently stood forth prominently in the decrees of the Council of Trent.⁶⁹

He also said of Aquinas that “his theological doctrine, accepted by the Catholic Church, *outshines every other as being safer and more secure.*”⁷⁰

⁶⁴ *Op. cit.*, 64.

⁶⁵ Bull *Laudabilis Deus*, Aug. 31, 1368, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 64.

⁶⁶ Bull *Piis fidelium*, July 20, 1451, *op. cit.*, 76.

⁶⁷ Bull *Etsi cunctae*, July 29, 1496, *op. cit.*, 84.

⁶⁸ Bull *Salvatoris*, April 15, 1564, *op. cit.*, 96.

⁶⁹ Bull *Mirabilis Deus*, April 11, 1567, *op. cit.* 98.

⁷⁰ Bull *In eminenti*, July 29, 1570, *op cit.*, 99.

Clement VIII praised him as the angelic interpreter of the divine will,⁷¹ and added:

The proof of his doctrine is the great number of books which he wrote in a very short time, in practically every branch of learning, with remarkable order and wonderful planning, and *with no error at all*. While writing these works he had the holy Apostles Peter and Paul speaking to him and at the command of God they explained certain passages to him. When he finished his works he heard them approved by the express word of Christ the Lord.⁷²

For *Paul V*, St. Thomas is the shining athlete of the Catholic faith:

By the shield of whose works the Church Militant happily escaped the darts of heretics,⁷³ defender of the Catholic Church and conqueror of heretics.⁷⁴

Making this idea his own, *Benedict XIII* wrote to the brethren of the Order of Preachers:

Pursue with energy your Doctor's works, *more brilliant than the sun and written without the shadow of error*. These works made the Church illustrious with wonderful erudition, since they march ahead and proceed with unimpeded step, protecting and vindicating by that *surest rule of Christian doctrine*, the truth of our holy religion.⁷⁵

His doctrine, continually commended to the faithful by the constant approbation of the Supreme Pontiffs, cannot be adorned with praise befitting its great merits in the Church. That same doctrine, lighting up the whole world as the sun, brought forth tremendous good for the Christian Church and every day bears more fruit.⁷⁶

Benedict XIV again brought these things to mind and adopted them in the Bull approving the Theological College of

⁷¹ Bull *In quo est*, Nov. 22, 1603, *op. cit.*, 109.

⁷² Bull *Sicut Angeli*, Nov. 22, 1603, *op. cit.*, 112.

⁷³ Bull *Splendidissimus athleta*, Sept. 17, 1607, *op. cit.*, 117.

⁷⁴ Bull *Cum sicut*, Oct. 20, 1614, *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Bull *Demissas preces*, Nov. 6, 1724, *op. cit.* 147.

⁷⁶ Bull *Pretiosus*, May 26, 1727, *ibid.*, 148, 149.

St. Denis outside of Granada, on August 21, 1756. At the time he greatly praised and confirmed its statutes which commanded “ that henceforth none of the Masters or Lectors of the College of St. Denis shall read, hand down or explain any other doctrine to their students in that College.”⁷⁷ Having himself written many learned works, the Pontiff freely confessed on his own behalf:

In the works We have written on various points, after We had diligently perused and examined the opinion of the Angelic Doctor, We adhered and subscribed freely to his ever admirable doctrine. We candidly confess that if there is anything good in our books it must be ascribed wholly to such a great Teacher rather than to Ourselves.⁷⁸

The same Pontiff continued:

The other praises of the holy Doctor are surpassed by this, that he never despised his opponents or seemed to vilify or betray them but treated all courteously and very humanely. If he came upon any of their expressions which were inaccurate, ambiguous or obscure, he would temper his criticism with a smooth and benign interpretation. If the cause of religion or faith demanded that he investigate and refute their opinion, he would accomplish the refutation with so much discretion that he deserved no less praise for his manner of disagreement than for his assertion of the Catholic truth.⁷⁹

Pius VI would not at all allow “ that the divine eloquence of Thomas should be bandied about, as if it were a novel doctrine, and impugned by idle discussion ”⁸⁰ since, as he himself said later:

In many schools Thomas Aquinas was rightly called the Sun of doctrine and the standard for theologians, because he taught only what was consistent with Sacred Scripture and the Fathers. Every-

⁷⁷ *Op. cit.*, 156.

⁷⁸ Allocution to the Dominican General Chapter, July 3, 1756, the Pontiff presiding, *op. cit.*, 158.

⁷⁹ Constitution *Sollicita*, *op. cit.*, 161.

⁸⁰ Allocution to the Dominican General Chapter, the Pontiff presiding, May 17, 1777, *op. cit.*, 170.

thing he wrote is worthy, as it is piously said, of divine confirmation. And so Our predecessors commended his doctrine with outstanding praises as the shield of Christian religion and the resolute guardian of the Church. Recently, Benedict XIV, whose wisdom We thoroughly admired, ordered Thomistic doctrine to be restored in the College of St. Denis the Areopagite outside Granada, and proposed the penalty of interdict for anyone who departed from it.⁸¹

Pius IX said:

The facts testify that the Church, in the Ecumenical Councils held after his death, so used his writings that many of the decrees propounded *found their source in his works and sometimes even the same words were used* to clarify Catholic dogmas or to destroy rising errors.⁸²

Leo XIII, recalling all these instances and going beyond them, recollected with approval that Thomas' doctrine was present at the deliberations and the decrees of the Fathers in all the Ecumenical Councils held after his death. Not only was it present but practically presiding "and contending with irresistible force and auspicious result against the errors of the Greeks, heretics and rationalists." The Pontiff added:

This is the greatest glory of Thomas, altogether his own and shared with no other Catholic Doctor, that the Fathers of Trent, in order to proceed in an orderly fashion during the conclave, desired to have opened upon the altar together with the Scriptures and the decrees of the Supreme Pontiffs, the *Summa* of St. Thomas Aquinas whence they could draw counsel, reasons and answers.⁸³

Leo XIII himself desired nothing more than

that the excellent wisdom of the Angelic Doctor flow far and wide. There is nothing more suitable to oppose the perverse notions of our times. There is no more powerful agent for conserving the truth.⁸⁴

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Letter to Fr. Raymond Bianchi, July 9, 1870, *op. cit.*, 177.

⁸³ *Aeterni Patris*, *loc. cit.*, 66.

⁸⁴ *Motu proprio Placere nobis*, on the complete edition of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, Jan. 18, 1880, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 200.

Truly,

anyone seriously interested in Philosophy and Theology and desirous of attaining some proficiency in those disciplines needs nothing more than a greater familiarity with the *Summa contra Gentiles* and the *Summa Theologiae*.⁸⁵

Indeed,

the book *par excellence* whence students can study Scholastic Theology with much profit is the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas.⁸⁶ And those who are doing any work in sacred science so sharply attacked at present, have a source in the volumes of St. Thomas whence they can fully demonstrate the bases of Christian faith, whence they can convince others of supernatural truth, and whence they can repel the vicious attacks of the enemy upon our holy religion.⁸⁷

The Pontiff was lavish in his praise of Francis Satolli, later Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Studies, for his edition of commentaries

on the *Summa* of St. Thomas Aquinas, so that his readers might not allow the text of the Angelic Doctor to escape from their hands. In this way only and not otherwise will the genuine doctrine of St. Thomas flourish in the schools, which is a goal very close to Our heart. *For the method of teaching which relies upon the authority and judgment of several masters has a changeable basis, in that mutually contradictory opinions arise which cannot be reconciled with the mind of St. Thomas. Then, too, such diverse opinions nourish dissension and disagreement which can no longer disturb Catholic schools without great harm to Christian knowledge.* We desire that teachers of Sacred Theology, imitating the Tridentine Fathers, should wish to have the *Summa* of St. Thomas open on their desks before them, whence they may find counsel, arguments and theological conclusions. From such schools the Church may rightly expect fearless soldiers who can destroy error and defend Catholicism.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Letter to Cardinals Simeoni and Zigliara, Oct. 2, 1886, *op. cit.*, 230.

⁸⁶ Encyclical *Depuis le jour*, on the education of the clergy in France, Sept. 8, 1899. *Acts*, VI, 100.

⁸⁷ Brief *Cum hoc sit*, Aug. 4, 1880, *op. cit.*, I, 114.

⁸⁸ Letter of June 19, 1886, *op. cit.*, 228.

He also strongly praised A. Breznay for editing the works of Cardinal Peter Pazmany,

Pazmany is one who with profound sense and lofty erudition has issued treatises on the nobler branches of learning. He followed as leader and master our remarkable Thomas, who is easily the prince of Sacred Science.⁸⁹

He insisted yet more urgently:

This point is vital, that Bishops expend every effort to see that young men, destined to be the hope of the Church, should be imbued with the holy and heavenly doctrine of the Angelic Doctor. In those places where young men have devoted themselves to the patronage and doctrine of St. Thomas, true wisdom will flourish, drawn as it is from solid principles, and explained by reason in an orderly fashion.⁹⁰

We know that the Catholic clergy will be *more solidly penetrated by divine science the more fully and thoroughly it is imbued with the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas*.⁹¹ The more the clergy is penetrated by the doctrine of St. Thomas, the more it will go forth instructed with stronger bases for a solid faith, and *so much the more fruitful and useful will be its ministry to the faithful*. Furthermore, those who impede Catholic truth with fallacious arguments will find its defenders better prepared, and supplied with excellent weapons for a strenuous defense.⁹²

If Sacred Theology is seen to flourish and progress according to the mind of St. Thomas, that fact should be a cause for rejoicing. So the Archbishop of Milan is congratulated upon the restoration in the Theological Faculty of Milan of

Theology proceeding correctly and well according to the plan and method of Aquinas in accordance with Our command. Every day We become more clearly aware how powerfully Sacred Doctrine taught by its Master and Patron, Thomas, affords the greatest possible utility for both clergy and laity.⁹³

In following the leadership of Thomas scholars enter upon

⁸⁹ Letter of Sept. 5, 1901, *op. cit.*, 269.

⁹⁰ Apostolic Letter on the Mexican Hierarchy, June 23, 1891, *op. cit.*, 239.

⁹¹ Letter to Rev. P. J. Berthier, Aug. 29, 1892, *op. cit.*, 242.

⁹² Letter to the Patriarch of Venice, March 26, 1881, *op. cit.*, 217-218.

⁹³ Letter of July 31, 1893, *op. cit.*, 254.

the right path for seeking a knowledge of the mysteries of faith, as far as this life allows. And so,

It is right that young men in the Academies and Schools should be chiefly exercised in acquiring a scientific knowledge of dogma by means of reasoning from the articles of faith to their consequences, according to the rules of approved and sound philosophy; yet the judicious and instructed theologian will by no means pass by that method of doctrine which draws its proof from the authority of the Bible; for Theology does not receive its principles from any other science but immediately from God by revelation. So it does not receive of other sciences as from a superior but uses them as her inferiors and handmaids. (*Summa Theol.*, I, q. 1, a 5 ad 2.) It is this view of doctrinal teaching which is laid down and recommended by the prince of theologians, Aquinas.⁹⁴

St. Thomas is to be considered the master not only in speculative theology but also in positive theology and biblical exegesis. The Pontiff went on,

Care must be taken that young men approach biblical studies suitably instructed and formed; otherwise just hopes will be frustrated, or what is worse, they will unthinkingly risk the danger of error, falling an easy prey to the sophism and labored erudition of the Rationalists. They will be very well prepared indeed if, by the method We have pointed out and prescribed, they studiously cultivate and thoroughly understand Philosophy and Theology under the leadership of St. Thomas. In this way they will be well prepared to begin the study both of the Bible and of positive theology and will make satisfactory progress in both.⁹⁵

By his own example the Pontiff strengthened this admonition. For, in his learned and salutary Encyclical Letters he always used St. Thomas Aquinas as his guide and preceptor. This can be easily recognized in his Encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* on the study of Sacred Scripture, the Encyclicals *Immortale Dei* and *Sapientiae Christianae* on the Christian constitution of States and the civil duties of Christians, the Encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Libertas* on social and political questions, the Encyclical *Satis cognitum* on the unity of the Church, the

⁹⁴ *Providentissimus Deus*, Nov. 18, 1893, *op. cit.*, IV, 28.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Encyclicals *Tametsi* and *Mirae caritatis* on Christ the Redeemer and the Holy Eucharist, the Encyclical *Divinum illud munus* on the action of the Holy Spirit in the souls of the just, and many others.

Blessed Pius X made all these remarkable approbations of Thomistic theology his own and asserted that the chief of Leo's praises is his restoration of the doctrine of St. Thomas. For he restored the Angelic Doctor . . . as the leader and master of Theology, whose divine genius fashioned weapons marvelously suited to protect the truth and destroy the many errors of the times. Indeed, those principles of wisdom, useful for all time, which the holy Fathers and Doctors passed on to us, have been organized by no one more aptly than by Thomas, and no one has explained them more clearly.⁹⁶

He also found much consolation in the fact that the study of Theology in the University of Fribourg in Switzerland

Was being guided by Dominican brethren who, following a true appraisal of science, especially of sacred science, clothe themselves with the security of true teaching, for they have their own brother in Theology, that divine light, Thomas Aquinas, who is not only the prince but also the leader and master of sacred schools. This is as Our predecessor Leo XIII ordered and We confirm that order with the certainty of fruitful results.⁹⁷

In addition he urged,

That no one, in any way whatsoever, depart from the regulations of the Church in the matter of teaching. Rejecting modernistic fallacies, let them deal only with the sources of Sacred Doctrine and well-based Philosophy from the rich vein of the Angelic Doctor.⁹⁸

Indeed those who depart from Thomas, especially in Theology, "seem to effect ultimately their own withdrawal from the Church."⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Apostolic Letter *In praecipuis* to the Roman Academy of St. Thomas, Jan. 23, 1904, *Acta Pii X*, ed. Bonne Presse, I, 124.

⁹⁷ Letter to the Bishop of St. Gall, Feb. 6, 1906, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 274.

⁹⁸ Letter to the Professors of the Theological Faculty of Fribourg, July 11, 1908, *op. cit.*, 277.

⁹⁹ Letter to Fr. Pègues, Nov. 17, 1907, *op. cit.*, 276.

On the contrary, to follow Thomas as leader is the same as never departing from the rule of Christian truth.¹⁰⁰

In this particular matter no safer principle can be employed than to follow Thomas as leader and master. Those who write of divine things according to his mind draw great light and strength from this source.¹⁰¹

We consider of very great value the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas, with which We especially wish all students to be imbued, in order that they may sweep out depraved ideas of divine and human things, which insinuate themselves everywhere, and being solidly based in Christian truth themselves, they may implant it deeply in the hearts of all.¹⁰²

As we have said, one may not desert Aquinas, especially in philosophy and theology, without great harm; *following him is the safest way to a knowledge of divine things.*¹⁰³

His golden doctrine lights up the mind with his own brilliance, his path and method lead to the deepest knowledge of divine things *without any danger of error.*¹⁰⁴

He added this most grave pronouncement in which unique doctrinal authority in the Church is attributed to Aquinas,

If the doctrine of any author or saint has ever been approved at any time by Us or Our predecessors with singular commendation joined with an invitation and order to propagate and to defend it, it may easily be understood that *it was commended only insofar as it agreed with the principles of Aquinas or was in no way opposed to them.*¹⁰⁵

So, Theology as taught in Catholic schools must strictly follow the true doctrine of St. Thomas,

the master of Sacred Theology. . . . Teachers should prudently call to mind that the power to teach has been given to them not in

¹⁰⁰ Letter to Fr. Velásquez, March 7, 1909, *AAS* 1 (1909), 275.

¹⁰¹ Letter to Fr. Lottini, Aug. 8, 1910, *AAS* 2 (1910), 724.

¹⁰² Letter to Fr. Cormier, Aug. 4, 1913, *op. cit.*, 280.

¹⁰³ Motu proprio *Praeclara*, June 24, 1914, *AAS* 6 (1914), 335.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁰⁵ Motu proprio *Doctoris Angelici*, June 29, 1914, *AAS* 6 (1914).

order to pass on their own opinions to their students, but to impart to them the approved doctrines of the Church.¹⁰⁶

Furthermore,

For the more profound study of this science, as it ought to be studied in Universities and Colleges, and in all Seminaries and Institutes empowered to grant academic degrees, it is of first importance that the old system of lecturing on the actual text of the *Summa Theologica*—which should never have been allowed to fall into disuse—be revived; for the reason also that lectures on this book make it easier to understand and even to illustrate the solemn decrees of the Teaching Church and the acts which have since been passed. For, ever since the happy death of the holy Doctor, the Church has not held a single Council, but he has been present at it with the wealth of his doctrine.¹⁰⁷

And so, in order that the genuine and entire doctrine of St. Thomas may flourish in our schools, a hope which is very close to Our heart, and in order that the system of teaching be abolished which depends upon the authority and judgment of the individual teacher, and therefore has a changeable foundation whence many diverse and mutually conflicting opinions arise not without great injury to Christian learning, (Leo XIII, Letter *Qui te*, June 19, 1886) We will, order and command that teachers of Sacred Theology in Universities, Academies, Colleges, Seminaries and Institutes having the power by Apostolic indult to grant academic degrees and doctorates in that field take the *Summa Theologica* as the text for their lectures and explain it in Latin. They should also take particular care that their students develop a deep affection for the *Summa*. . . . In this way and in no other will Theology be restored to its pristine dignity, and the proper order and value will be restored to all sacred studies, and the province of the intellect and reason flower again in a second spring.¹⁰⁸

The Roman Pontiff himself explained the sense and force of his words in an audience granted the professors and students of the Angelicum College at Rome, June 28, 1914, at which we were privileged to be present. Pius X said then that he wanted no other doctrine than that of Thomas in the Church of God, in view of the fact that *his is the pure, solid, complete doctrine*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

of the Church, and more than that, the doctrine of Christ Himself and of God Himself.

From this the meaning of what he wrote a few days before to the College of St. Anselm in Rome is clearly evident:

That the privilege of conferring all the academic degrees in philosophy and theology may bear more abundant fruit for the Order and the Church, *We desire and command that the Professors of the College of St. Anselm always follow the doctrine of Aquinas in philosophy and theology*, and use the text itself in their lectures to the students of Theology who are working for degrees.¹⁰⁹

Benedict XV unhesitatingly repeated the same thought:

It is a holy and salutary practice, and practically necessary in Catholic schools where young men are acquiring a knowledge of philosophy and theology, to have Thomas Aquinas as the supreme master. Therefore, what has been most wisely determined in this matter by Our predecessors, especially Leo XIII and Pius X of happy memory, is to be retained whole and inviolate at all costs. In addition, we consider it extremely useful if the Angelic Doctor were to step out from the very sanctuary of the school, as it were, and proffer the almost divine light of his brilliance to all who desire to be more deeply learned in their religion. For it is clear that the Modernists, as they are called, have fallen into such a great variety of opinions, all distant from the faith, precisely because they have neglected the principles and teaching of St. Thomas.¹¹⁰

He wrote to Fr. Theissling:

We know as well as Our wise predecessors how to be zealous for the glory of Aquinas and We desire that this great Doctor, as he is the more viciously assailed by the heretics of our times, should on that account be more conscientiously regarded as leader and master by students for the Church in the study of philosophy and in sacred studies.¹¹¹

Indeed, he is the one “whom, as a son of Dominic, God considered worthy to illumine His Church”;¹¹² for he with his

¹⁰⁹ Motu proprio *Praeclara*, loc. cit.

¹¹⁰ Letter to Fr. Hugon, May 5, 1916, *AAS* 8 (1916), 174.

¹¹¹ Letter of Nov. 17, 1918, *AAS* 10 (1918), 480.

¹¹² Encyclical *Fausto appetente*, June 29, 1921, *AAS* 13 (1921), 334.

marvelous wisdom and holiness bound fast to himself every lover of the true and the good. For,

Who is there devoted to serious study, with love for Holy Church joined to zeal for learning, who does not most faithfully cherish Thomas Aquinas, whose doctrine by the gift of divine providence furnishes so dependable a light for the Church to strengthen the truth and destroy error forever? *To the credit of the Order of Preachers we must add this praise, not so much that it nourished the Angelic Doctor, but that never after, even in the slightest degree, has it deviated from his doctrine.*¹¹³

To the Theological College of Bologna he wrote:

We note with approval that Thomas Aquinas is there held in a proper position of respect. Our predecessors, the illustrious Leo XIII and Pius X, extolled his doctrine with highest praise and prescribed that it be religiously retained in Catholic schools.

He strongly praised this policy. And at the same time he reminded the Theological Faculty of the obligation of holding inviolate the principles of St. Thomas and of teaching the *Summa Theologica* itself in the schools of Theology, according to the prescriptions of the *Motu proprio Doctoris Angelici*.¹¹⁴

He commanded the same in the statutes of the Roman Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas republished by his order on March 12, 1915.¹¹⁵ And on March 7, 1916 he confirmed on his own authority the decree of Pius X on using the *Summa Theologica* as the text for lectures in all the Theological Faculties of Italy and the adjacent islands:

The *Summa Theologica* must be used as the text for lectures in the scholastic part of teaching, in such a way that, together with some other text indicating the logical order of questions and containing the positive part of theology, the *Summa Theologica* is used and explained for the scholastic part of the doctrine.¹¹⁶

The theological wisdom of Aquinas holds a very high place

¹¹³ Letter to Fr. Theissling, Oct. 29, 1916, AAS 8 (1916), 397.

¹¹⁴ *Motu proprio Sacrae Theologiae*, Dec. 3, 1914, AAS (1914) 690, 691.

¹¹⁵ AAS 7 (1915), 129.

¹¹⁶ Response of the S. Cong. of Seminaries and Universities, AAS 8 (1916), 157.

not only in dogmatic and moral theology but also in Apologetics, Ascetical, and Mystical Theology, as well as in Catechetics.

In Apologetics, as the Pontiff wrote to Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange:

That Aquinas has a phenomenal power for clarifying and defending Christian wisdom, is clear from your recent book *De Revelatione*. In your explanation of that part of fundamental theology called Apologetics you use the doctrine and method of St. Thomas in such a way that you singularly overcome not only the ancient but even the recent adversaries of the Christian faith.¹¹⁷

In Ascetical and Mystical Theology as well,

Everyone is aware of the power of St. Thomas' doctrine to illustrate spiritual principles in both the ascetical and mystical life, and We freely admit Our indebtedness to him on more than one occasion.¹¹⁸

For he explained most clearly the doctrine of the Scriptures and of the Saints and Fathers on the elevation to the spiritual life and the conditions necessary for progress in the grace of the virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost, of which the perfection of the mystical life is composed.¹¹⁹

In the field of Catechetics Thomas holds a high place, as is clear from the words Benedict used in his hearty congratulation of Fr. Pègues on the appearance of his French edition of the *Summa* in the form of a catechism. Using this occasion the Pontiff declared that Thomas is the Master and Doctor of the whole Church, i. e., of all the faithful, clergy, laity, the wise and the unlearned, and of all time.

The eminent commendations of Thomas Aquinas by the Holy See no longer permit a Catholic to doubt that he was divinely raised up *that the Church might have a master whose doctrine should be followed in a special way at all times*. The singular wisdom of the man seems suitable to be offered directly not only to the clergy but to all who wish to extend their study of religion, and to the

¹¹⁷ Letter of Feb. 14, 1919, AAS 11 (1919), 121.

¹¹⁸ Letter to Fr. Bernadot, Sept. 15, 1921, AAS 13 (1921), 528.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

people generally as well. For nature brings it about that the more clearly a person approaches to the light, the more fully is he illuminated.¹²⁰

Finally the Pontiff desired all these approbations and commendations to be a law for the Universal Church, preserved inviolably forever, for he inserted this prescription in the Code of Canon Law:

Professors shall teach Theology and Philosophy and train students in these studies *entirely according to the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor, which they shall hold inviolately.* (can. 1366, 2)

In these words, as Pius XI said, "The method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor are *clearly consecrated*."¹²¹ and as it were, canonized.

By this law St. Thomas is truly raised to the position of teacher of the Church itself, and there is a literal fulfillment of the complete sense of that saying of Benedict XV: "The Church declared that the doctrine of Thomas is its own."¹²²

Rightly, therefore, did *Pius XI* recognize and restore the primitive title "Common Doctor of the Church" attributed to Aquinas;

Indeed, We so approve of the tributes paid to his almost divine brilliance that We believe Thomas should be called not only Angelic but even *Common or Universal Doctor of the Church*. As innumerable documents of every kind attest, the Church has adopted his doctrine for her own.¹²³

This Pontiff, following the footsteps of his predecessors,¹²⁴ added:

¹²⁰ Letter of Feb. 9, 1919, AAS 11 (1919), 71.

¹²¹ *Studiorum ducem*, loc. cit., 314.

¹²² Encyclical *Fausto appetente*, loc. cit., 332.

¹²³ *Studiorum ducem*, loc. cit.

¹²⁴ "Si, Eminenza, noi cammiremo, per quanto Iddio ci concederà, sulle orme dei nostri predecessori," Allocution to the members of the Roman Academy of St. Thomas, Cardinal Bisleti presiding, March 18, 1923, cf. M. Cordovani, O.P., "San Tommaso nella parola di Pio XI," *Angelicum* 6 (1929), 6.

What has been providentially determined in canon law on this matter should by all means be religiously and inviolately observed, since its purpose is to prepare a plenitude of priests who are equal to a task of such great magnitude.¹²⁵

Applying this to the Universities and Faculties of ecclesiastical studies in the whole Church he decreed:

Sacred Theology holds the chief place in a Theological Faculty. This study must be pursued by both a positive and a scholastic method. Therefore, when the truths of faith are explained and demonstrated from Scripture and tradition, their nature and close relation to the principles and doctrines of St. Thomas is to be investigated and clarified.¹²⁶

So that no part of the Church would remain exempted from the obligation of following Thomas, he extended the regulation to the regular clergy:

Let that, indeed, be inviolable for you which We published in agreement with Canon Law in Our Apostolic Letter on Seminaries and Clerical Studies, namely, that teachers, in teaching the principles of philosophy and theology, faithfully adhere to the scholastic method *according to the principles and doctrines of Aquinas*. Is anyone unaware how wonderfully suitable the scholastic discipline and angelic wisdom of Thomas is, which Our predecessors continually embellished with the most fulsome praise, for the purpose of explaining divine truths and refuting the errors of every age? The Angelic Doctor, so states Leo XIII, Our predecessor of immortal memory, in the encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, rich in divine and human knowledge, comparable to the sun, is responsible for the fact that he alone vanquished every error then in existence and supplied us with invincible weapons for destroying later errors which would continually arise.¹²⁷

For this reason the Pontiff expressed the greatest pleasure which the “Dogmatic Tracts” of Fr. Edward Hugon, O.P. afforded him:

¹²⁵ Apostolic Letter *Officiorum omnium*, Aug. 1, 1922. AAS 14 (1922), 454, 455.

¹²⁶ Apostolic Constitution *Deus scientiarum Dominus*, May 24, 1931. AAS 23 (1931), 253.

¹²⁷ Apostolic Letter *Unigenitus Dei Filius* to the supreme moderators of Religious Orders and of other Societies of religious men, March 19, 1924, AAS 16 (1924), 144.

Understand, dear son, that your treatises in which you explain theology for students in the form of a commentary on the principal dogmatic questions of the *Summa* of St. Thomas merit Our hearty approval, especially because you seem to have treated those very points which We not so long ago directed in an Apostolic Letter to the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities. For you have followed, as We then advised, not only the plan and method of St. Thomas, but his doctrines and principles as well. Throughout the whole tract you have caused positive theology, as it is called, to serve scholastic theology in such a way that the latter holds the chief place, as it should. Your work does not offer merely a dry review of dogmas. Rather, it presents a true and solid body of doctrine made up of principles and conclusions. Further, We are pleased to commend the lucidity of its content and expression and the zeal which prompts you, when the occasion is offered, to inject a spark of piety into the mind of the reader by your apt comments. So, continue with eagerness to pass on sacred science by word and writing to youths studying for the priesthood, following the mind of Aquinas.¹²⁸

Not only is the clergy to be steeped in this advantageous doctrine—and on this point he congratulated the Cardinal Archbishop of Bologna, Nassali Rocca, and the professors of the Theological Faculty of Bologna for drawing wisdom from the most pure source of Aquinas in order to educate their students in accordance with the commands and exhortations of himself and his predecessor¹²⁹—but even the laity should more fully cultivate and steep themselves in Christian wisdom. For that reason he praised the bishops of the whole region of Emilia for courses provided to this end.¹³⁰ It also afforded him great pleasure that the professors of the Catholic Institute of Paris follow Thomas Aquinas as a leader in such a way that many of the clergy and educated laity taste and study his doctrine, as it were, by the right of return to former privileges.¹³¹

Indeed,

The doctrine of St. Thomas is light which descends from God and

¹²⁸ Letter of February 25, 1923. *AAS* 15 (1923), 209.

¹²⁹ Letter of Jan. 11, 1924. *AAS* 16 (1924), 90.

¹³⁰ Letter of July 4, 1925. *AAS* 17 (1925), 375.

¹³¹ Letter to Cardinal Luçon, Oct. 18, 1925. *Ibid.*, 574.

returns to God. Truly in this man, whose virtue and doctrine, as has been well said, made of him the most learned of the saints and the most saintly of the learned, the divine wisdom willed to imprint Its mark more broadly and to enkindle one of the most luminous rays of Its immortal light. . . . It is no wonder that the Church has made this light her own and has adorned herself with it and has illustrated her immortal doctrine with it. . . . It is no wonder that all the Popes have nobly vied with one another in exalting him, proposing him, inculcating him, as a model, master, doctor, patron and protector of all schools.

As for himself,

He will always recommend to all true friends of faith and knowledge, of natural and revealed truth, that they remain faithful to St. Thomas and his doctrine.¹³²

Truly Thomas is the Leader and Master of studies and the Universal Doctor of the Church, as the Pontiff pointed out in his Encyclical *Studiorum Ducem*. He is the master in the major branches of learning, especially the sacred sciences, in which with marvelous sagacity he joins true science and piety.

This union of doctrine with piety, learning with virtue, truth with charity, is singularly manifest in the Angelic Doctor. And it is not without reason that he has been given the sun for a device, for he both brings the light of science to the mind, and at the same time fires the will with virtue. And, therefore, God the source of all sanctity and wisdom, evidently seems to have desired to point out in the case of Thomas how each of these qualities assists the other, how the practice of the virtues disposes to the contemplation of truth, and in turn, the profound consideration of truth gives lustre and perfection to the virtues.¹³³

Through the work and accomplishment of Thomas Sacred Theology was raised to the pinnacle of its dignity. This is true in apologetics, dogma and moral, ascetical and mystical, biblical and liturgical matters, as is clear from the office he composed in honor of the Holy Eucharist. He is considered to be not only the Theologian of the Holy Eucharist but its greatest prophet

¹³² Allocution to the members of the Roman Academy, *loc. cit.*

¹³³ *Loc. cit.*, 309-310.

and herald. For that reason he is also called Eucharistic Doctor.¹³⁴

St. Thomas is the bard of the Eucharist and its Doctor: *Cantor et Doctor Eucharisticus*; a poet sweet, sublime, luminous even when he employs neither verse nor meter. When he treats of the Divine Eucharist he carries us to the center which was his center, to the secret which was his secret, to the source of his purity, to the celestial food which was his angelic nourishment.¹³⁵

All these things are especially resplendent in his *Summa Theologiae* which "is heaven seen from earth."¹³⁶

In this allocution the Pontiff himself declared the real sense of how St. Thomas is the Guide of studies and Common Doctor of the Church, which title he had conferred upon Thomas in the Encyclical *Studiorum Ducem*.

Guide in studies:

Of all studies and of the method in all studies. The question of method is of capital importance. In order for science to be strict and luminous, method is all-important. When the method is erroneous and the path is lost, progress is impossible; and therefore a guide is necessary. Thomas is the guide, the *Dux in via*. . . .

Of a method which teaches how to prepare, so to speak, order in the soul, which forms a sort of spiritual filing cabinet. When we have many things to keep in proper order a filing cabinet is necessary, just as a card index is kept in archives and in libraries. Intellectual compartments in which all knowledge must be stored and systematized are found in that which we call method; and St. Thomas is, in this respect, a peerless master, and therefore he is the Leader in studies.

Common Doctor:

Doctor of the whole Church, of every science, of all knowable things; a characteristic which approaches divine power. In few intellects has the participation of the divine intellect sparkled so brilliantly, for which reason we ask ourselves if the Eternal Creator

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 317-320.

¹³⁵ Allocution to the professors and students of the Angelicum College, Nov. 12, 1924, cf. *Xenia Thomistica*, III, 600-601, Rome, 1925.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 600.

ever left a deeper imprint upon other minds. In his teaching is found *par excellence* one of the characteristics of the book of life. In all circumstances of life, for all problems which can arise that book has a word and a solution to proffer us. Such is the character of the Holy Gospel because it is the word of God. Something of this divine characteristic is in St. Thomas in his classical works: the *Summa Philosophica* and the *Summa Theologica*. In these books, well read and carefully consulted, there is a word and a solution for all the questions that can be presented to us: a sure word and a word of genius; they are two books which summarize the entire universe, heaven and earth. *The Summa Theologica is heaven seen from earth, and the Summa contra Gentiles is earth seen from heaven . . .* It is for this reason that St. Thomas merited the name of *Common Doctor*.

Let him, therefore, always be your light; let his books be your constant advisers; *from his books always attain truth*: if studied wisely and tirelessly, they will furnish the reply to all your questions with immense benefit for life.¹³⁷

From this he concluded in the Encyclical *Studiorum Ducem*:

Just as it was said of old to the Egyptians in time of famine: "Go to Joseph," so that they should receive a supply of corn to nourish their bodies, so to those who are now in quest of truth We now say: "Go to Thomas," that they may ask from him the food of solid doctrine of which he has an abundance to nourish their souls unto eternal life.¹³⁸

Finally, *Pius XII* following the footsteps and counsels of his predecessors stated that *those precepts found in the Code of Canon Law and in the Constitution "Deus scientiarum Dominus" relative to following and teaching the theological doctrine of St. Thomas in Catholic schools bind and have an obligatory force*, issued as they were in the manner of a decree. That doctrine, resting upon a solid rock, above and beyond the ravages of time, flourishes perpetually. It forms an invincible protection for the deposit of Catholic faith and even now safeguards it. It furnishes a safe path in leading to new investigations, and when they are completed, safely and prudently enjoys the results. In these studies "the Angelic Doctor is always a

¹³⁷ *Op. cit.*, 599-600.

¹³⁸ *Loc. cit.*, 323.

most skilled leader and is a never-failing light whose accomplishments will always remain fresh.”¹³⁹ “By this road one may proceed to a safe and solid knowledge of the truth.”¹⁴⁰

He admonished the members of the Society of Jesus “to observe with all diligence their laws which command them to follow the doctrine of St. Thomas as being more solid, safe, approved and consonant with their Constitutions.”¹⁴¹

“*These things have the force of law*, which bind all Catholic schools of philosophy and theology,”¹⁴² and therefore are to be observed by all as sacred and inviolable. He declared to the students of the regular and secular clergy pursuing sacred studies at Rome:

It is that wisdom of Aquinas which collected the truths of human reason, illustrated them with brilliance, and most aptly and solidly unified them into a wonderful whole. It is the wisdom of Aquinas which is especially suited to declare and defend the dogmas of the faith. And finally it is his wisdom which was able to refute effectively the basic errors continually arising, and conquer them invincibly. Wherefore, dear sons, bring to St. Thomas a heart full of love and zeal. With all your powers strive to explore with your intellect his excellent doctrine. *Freely embrace whatever clearly pertains to it and is supported by a solid reason found in it.*¹⁴³

Aquinas, the Angelic and Common Doctor, like the sea receiving into himself the rivers of wisdom from all who lived before his time, and whatever human reason had attained by thought and mental labor, so composed and ordered all of it in a wonderful manner and with brilliant clearness after exposing it to the supernal light emanating from the Gospel, that he seems to have left to his successors the power to imitate but to have taken away the power to surpass. The doctrine of Thomas not only was most apt for destroying ancient heresies, and for that reason stands forth as the champion of faith and firm bulwark of religion, but also

¹³⁹ Allocution to the Dominican General Chapter, Sept. 22, 1946. AAS 38 (1946), 387-388.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Allocution to the Jesuit General Congregation September 17, 1946, AAS 38 (1946), 380.

¹⁴² Allocution to the Dominican General Chapter, *loc. cit.*

¹⁴³ June 24, 1939. AAS 31 (1939). 246.

offers the most powerful weapon for destroying thoroughly errors which are being reborn in perpetual succession and which wear the garb of newness.

Therefore, all who attend Catholic schools of any type should cherish, revere and imitate Thomas Aquinas as a heavenly patron, *those especially who study him in philosophy and theology, and specifically students divinely called to the priesthood and growing into the hope of the Church, ought to follow Thomas as leader and master*, recalling that there is an innate excellence in Thomistic doctrine and a singular force and power to cure the evils which afflict our age.¹⁴⁴

Those things which in our day have been foolishly and erroneously proposed by certain people on the Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church, could have been avoided if they had followed Aquinas in the matter. For examination of this doctrine

should have taken into account the very lucid opinions of masters of scholastic theology and especially the Angelic and Common Doctor, for they had discoursed on this point. You surely realize that his arguments closely correspond to the thought of the Fathers. Those arguments add nothing new but merely comment, by way of explanation, upon the divine words of Scripture.¹⁴⁵

Similarly, the doctrine and deeper investigation of biblical inspiration, resting on the principles of the Angelic Doctor, offers new aids and insights for exegesis. The Pontiff said:

Among other things, this seems to deserve special mention. Catholic theologians following the doctrine of the Fathers and *especially that of the Angelic and Common Doctor*, have examined and explained the nature and effects of biblical inspiration more exactly and more fully than was wont to be done in previous ages. For having begun by expounding minutely the principle that the inspired writer, in composing the sacred book, is the living and reasonable instrument of the Holy Spirit, they rightly observe that, impelled by the divine motion, he so uses his faculties and powers, that from the books composed by him all may easily infer the special character of each one and, as it were, his personal traits.

¹⁴⁴ Letter to Fr. Gillet, March 7, 1942, AAS 34 (1942), 97.

¹⁴⁵ Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, June 29, 1943. AAS 35 (1943), 208.

Let the interpreter then, with all care and without neglecting any light derived from recent research, endeavor to determine the peculiar character and circumstances of the sacred writer, the age in which he lived, the sources written or oral to which he had recourse and the forms of expression he employed.¹⁴⁶

Further on he says,

For of the modes of expression which, among ancient peoples, and especially those of the East, human language used to express its thought, none is excluded from the Sacred Books, provided the way of speaking adopted in no wise contradicts the holiness and truth of God, as, with his customary wisdom, the Angelic Doctor already observed in these words. 'In Scripture divine things are presented to us in the manner which is in common use amongst men.' (*Comment. ad Hebr.*, Cap. 1. lect. 4) (For as the substantial Word of God became like to men in all things, except sin, so the words of God, expressed in human language, are made like to human speech in every respect, except error.¹⁴⁷

The same may be said on the question of so-called "humanism" concerning which some speak today at great length, though not always aptly.

Humanism is now the order of the day. Undoubtedly it is not an easy task to extract and recognize a clear idea of its nature in the course of its historical evolution. Nevertheless—although humanism has for long had the pretension of being formally opposed to the Middle Ages which preceded it—it is none the less certain that *everything it contains of truth, of goodness, of the great and the eternal, belongs to the spiritual universe of the greatest genius of the Middle Ages, Saint Thomas Aquinas*. In its general characteristics, the concept of man and of the world as it appears in the Christian and Catholic perspective, remains essentially identical with itself: the same in St. Augustine as in St. Thomas or Dante; the same again in contemporary Christian Philosophy. The obscurity of certain philosophical or theological questions, which have been illuminated and gradually resolved in the course of the centuries, detracts in no way from the reality of this fact.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu*, Sept. 30, 1943. AAS 35 (1943), 314.

¹⁴⁷ *Loc. cit.*, 315-316.

¹⁴⁸ Allocution to the Congress on Humanistic Studies, Rome, Sept. 25, 1949. AAS 41 (1949), 555.

With new errors or at least the danger of error arising, the Pontiff is more insistent in urging a return to St. Thomas and more strongly commands fidelity in the observance of the Church's precept on following the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor. This is clear from his Encyclical *Humani Generis*, Aug. 12, 1950. To those present at the Third International Thomistic Congress in Rome he said,

This represents a safe path for you who are engaged in discussion and publication; follow the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas, which lights up the road like a brilliant ray of sun.¹⁴⁹

Indeed,

Heaven is distant from the earth in the same degree that the truths of divine revelation exceed the powers of the human mind. They are loftier than those powers of mind but not in the least contradictory or repugnant to them. They are above reason but not opposed to it. With infectious eagerness St. Thomas leads human intelligence, hesitating and dubious by reason of the brilliant splendor, into the very temple of the mysteries of God. Producing the solution to problems by the artistry of his arguments, he brings out the clear and splendid harmony existing between divine and human things.

How sharply the contest waxes at present in fixing reasons used both in faith and in philosophy, is shown in Our Encyclical Letter mentioned above. We published it with this plan and purpose in mind, to preserve the deposit of Catholic faith whole, untarnished and uninjured. Discuss among yourselves those questions which We touched on in Our letter, and afterwards pass the results on to the studious youths whom you are teaching. Always follow that inspiration by which the Angelic Doctor learned the truth, namely, by the greater effort of intelligence and by religious piety. Treat these matters thoroughly, insisting upon his method, by which he always defined the limits and content of his opinions, with no useless flow of words but with serious and solid discourse.¹⁵⁰

In the Apostolic Exhortation to all the Clergy on Sept. 23, 1950, he concludes:

Wherefore, lest the zeal of sacred ministers be miserably subject to change and hesitation, We particularly urge you, Venerable

¹⁴⁹ Sept. 17, 1950. *AAS* 42 (1950), 734.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 735.

Brethren, to be especially vigilant in insuring that those special regulations for such studies which this Holy See has established be received and preserved with complete fidelity.¹⁵¹

In the Preface for the Mass of St. Thomas, which the Holy Father himself wrote, he gives thanks to God and addresses Him in these words: “Who wished to raise up in Thy Church the blessed Doctor Thomas, truly Angelic by reason of his pure life and sublime mind; that he might communicate his solid and salutary doctrine and illuminate the Church like the sun; whose wisdom, *especially commended to all*, is admired by the whole world.”¹⁵²

Weighing and considering all these points together it must be candidly and ungrudgingly admitted that *the Church concedes the highest theological authority to Thomas alone over the other ecclesiastical writers of all times. Therefore, his canonical authority in the field of theology is truly the greatest over each and every one of the Fathers and Doctors.*

With good reason, then, Fr. Salaverri, S. J. wrote that: “in Theology . . . the authority of St. Thomas is *entirely matchless and greater than that of any other Doctor or Theologian in the Catholic Church.*”¹⁵³ And again, “the authority . . . of St. Thomas, which may be called canonical, *is greater than the authority of any other Catholic theologian.*”¹⁵⁴

2. In Philosophy

When the minds of philosophers were accepting the Catholic faith and exercising the task of philosophy with due reverence for the truths held by faith, there was no necessity for the Teaching Authority of the Church to protect natural reason and Philosophy itself.

But from the time of the Renaissance, as it is called, and especially the Reformation, when philosophers did not hesitate

¹⁵¹ *Menti Nostrae*, AAS 42 (1950), 688.

¹⁵² Dominican Missal, Preface of the Mass of St. Thomas.

¹⁵³ *De Ecclesia Christi*, no. 872, p. 757. Madrid, 1950.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 874, p. 758.

“to philosophize without any regard whatever to the faith, asking, and conceding in return, the right to invent anything that they can think of, and anything that they please,”¹⁵⁵ philosophy gradually degenerated into a seminary of errors, and philosophers into artisans fashioning arguments against the true faith. The noble exercise of the mind reached such a low state that it finally attacked reason itself, and Philosophy, so-called, began to devour itself. This condition of Philosophy accurately fulfilled the axiom of Aquinas: Philosophy “is wisdom only as long as it is subject to divine wisdom; but when it withdraws from God, it becomes foolishness.”¹⁵⁶ This especially resulted from Kant’s critique.

And so, in order to cleanse reason and philosophy as grace does fallen nature, the Teaching Authority of the Church eagerly and seriously concerned itself with the restoration and renovation of true Christian philosophy. First, by the ordinary *magisterium*, Gregory XVI and Pius IX spoke out against the errors of fideism or extreme traditionalism on the one hand, and rationalism, ontologism and pantheism on the other. Then the Vatican Council solemnly condemned the same errors, especially those relating to revelation and faith, and the motives of credibility, and also the relation between faith and reason. In its deliberations the Council very accurately distinguished and affirmed the complete lack of opposition between reason and faith, philosophy and theology, the natural and the supernatural orders.

To cure these errors arising from the abuse of Philosophy, the Fathers stated that no means was better suited than the reestablishment of a true and healthy philosophy, which had reached its peak of perfection in St. Thomas Aquinas. Then, after the Council was temporarily adjourned due to the state of world affairs, the several Fathers began to send letters to Pope Pius IX asking and begging him to declare Thomas Patron of all Catholic Schools. These Fathers said in their discussions

¹⁵⁵ *Aeterni Patris*, loc. cit., 68.

¹⁵⁶ *Comment. in I Cor.*, cap. 15, lect. 5.

about this that, since the impurities of every kind of error flowed from a disrespect for the teaching authority of the Angelic Doctor, they would be dispersed if he were established and accepted as Patron of Schools. Eminent among the Fathers urging this were Cardinals Riario Sforza of Naples and Joachim Pecci of Perugia, both of whom assisted at the Vatican Council and took a large part in its affairs.

However, Pius IX died on Feb. 18, 1878, and on the 20th, Cardinal Pecci was elected as his successor, taking the name of *Leo XIII*. In assuming the Supreme Pontificate he bent all his energy to restoring, urging, spreading, and even by his Apostolic authority prescribing a safe and healthy philosophy:

“the more energetically the enemies of religion attempt to suggest to simple men and youths that they learn those things which becloud the mind and corrupt morals, so much the more readily must we lean upon not only a suitable and approved method of instruction, but the very content of the instruction must strictly conform to the Catholic faith in letter and in spirit. This should be especially true in philosophy upon which correct procedure in other sciences very greatly depends. The purpose of philosophy is not to undermine divine revelation but rather to pave the road for it, and defend it from enemies, as the great Augustine, the Angelic Doctor and other masters of Christian wisdom have taught us by their example and writings.”¹⁵⁷

That this is especially true of the philosophy of St. Thomas, he signified to the scholarly A. Uccelli, who edited, from autograph manuscripts, the *Summa contra Gentiles*:

We are very grateful to you for having contributed your care and effort to this remarkable work, in which the holy Doctor pours out from a rich vein the treasures of a profound philosophy, and supplies very timely weapons to refute the errors of the age.¹⁵⁸

The famous Encyclical *Aeterni Patris* of August 4, 1879 had as its special purpose to inculcate the philosophy of Aquinas and to prescribe that it be followed.

¹⁵⁷ Encyclical *Inscrutabili*, April 21, 1878. *Acta, ed. cit.* I, 18.

¹⁵⁸ Letter of Dec. 7, 1879, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.* 178.

Indeed, if one should examine the evils which afflict our age, he would easily discover that the fruitful cause both of those which we now suffer and those which we greatly fear is depraved knowledge of human and divine things. Such knowledge, long poured out from the schools of philosophers, has crept into every level of society, and it has been received with the common applause of very many. Since it is natural for man to follow reason as the guide of his actions, if the understanding go wrong in anything, his will easily follows. This is the way that perverse ideas, residing in the mind, influence human actions and pervert them. On the contrary, if the mind of man be healthy and strongly grounded in solid and true principles, many benefits would accrue to both the public and private good.¹⁵⁹

While it is true that the whole salvation of the human race should not be expected from philosophy, since that depends upon the grace of God through Jesus Christ, still,

Natural aids should neither be despised nor undervalued, for the providence of divine wisdom disposing all things strongly and sweetly, supplies the human race with those aids. Among them the right use of philosophy is clearly the most important.¹⁶⁰

True and sound philosophy renders *three* kinds of assistance to the Catholic religion. *Firstly*, philosophy paves the way for it in the proof for the preambles of the Faith, namely, the existence of one personal God, distinct from the world, Who is omnipotent and can neither deceive nor be deceived. This supplies the basis for the rational credibility of divine revelation. The consequence should be, then, that if God speaks to men, they should give the full assent of their minds. That He has actually spoken to men is abundantly clear from the many miracles performed by God Himself to support His word. Human reason is manifestly capable of knowing the existence and probative force of such miracles with reference both to the credibility of divinely revealed doctrine and the fact that it should be believed.

Secondly, when by faith the divinely revealed mysteries are

¹⁵⁹ *Aeterni Patris, loc. cit.*, 44.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

accepted, philosophy helps, in various ways, to understand and explain them in its function as the instrument of the science of faith which is called Sacred Theology. Indeed, to use the words of the same Pontiff:

The constant and varied use of philosophy is required that sacred theology may assume and wear the nature, habit and character of true science. For in this noblest of the sciences it is especially necessary that the many and different parts of heavenly doctrine be gathered together, as it were, into one body. Thus they are united by a union of harmony among themselves, all the parts being fittingly arranged, and derived from their own proper principles. Finally, each and every part is strengthened by its own unanswerable arguments.

Nor must we pass over in silence, or reckon of little account that more accurate and fuller knowledge of our belief and, as far as may be, that somewhat clearer understanding of the mysteries of the faith which St. Augustine and the other Fathers both praised and labored to attain and which the Vatican Council itself¹⁶¹ decreed to be most fruitful. Such knowledge and understanding are certainly acquired more fully and easily by those who join to integrity of life and study of the faith a mind that has been disciplined by philosophical culture. Especially is this so since the same Vatican Council teaches that we ought to seek for understanding of holy dogmas of that kind both from the analogy of the things which are naturally known and also from the way in which the mysteries themselves are related to one another, and also to the ultimate end of man.¹⁶²

Lastly, this also

is the task of philosophy, to guard with religious care all truths that come to us by Divine tradition, and to resist all who dare to attack them. Philosophy enjoys high repute because it holds the position of bulwark of the faith and strong defense of religion.¹⁶³

These three duties and offices of reason and philosophy toward the Catholic religion, already clearly indicated by Thomas,¹⁶⁴ are completely and accurately fulfilled by the philosophy of Thomas himself.

¹⁶¹ Dogmatic Constitution *de Fide Catholica*, cap. 4.

¹⁶² *Aeterni Patris*, loc. cit., 50.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *In Boethii de Trinitate*, q. 2, a. 3 c.

Every true and sound fruit of reason which the Fathers and other ecclesiastical writers discovered in the field of philosophy over the course of centuries Thomas has gathered unto himself as into a sea and embellished in many ways by his own work. He fashioned a body of philosophy which is complete, sound, unified and ever powerful, in that it is based on principles so solid and universal that they penetrate and even anticipate all time and change. The result is that he encloses within his grasp an almost infinite number of truths to be opened up later masters at the proper time and with much fruit. He alone destroyed all errors, ancient, modern and future or, at least, he certainly supplies invincible weapons to destroy them.

Moreover, carefully distinguishing reason and faith, as is right, and yet joining them together in a harmony of friendship, he so guarded the rights of each, and so watched over the dignity of each, that, as far as man is concerned, reason can now hardly rise higher than she has risen, borne up in the flight of Thomas; and faith can hardly gain more helps and greater helpers from reason than those which Thomas has given her.¹⁶⁵

There is no sounder and safer philosophical doctrine and one which is more in accord with the Teaching Authority of the Church than that which is contained in the volumes of Thomas.¹⁶⁶

No one ever so well demonstrated the existence, nature and attributes of God and the other preambles to the faith, as is clear from an examination of the *Summa contra Gentiles* alone. In the same work he also prepared a defense of the Catholic faith more powerful than all others. Finally, no one ever offered such true, sound and deep elucidations and explanations of the mysteries of faith based on analogy and the connections of the mysteries one with another and with the ultimate end of man, as is set forth in his *Summa Theologiae*.

Therefore, the philosophy of St. Thomas is to be established and vigorously promoted in Catholic Schools, and teachers are required to teach it and students must accept it.

¹⁶⁵ *Aeterni Patris*, loc. cit., 64.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

We earnestly urge all of you, Venerable Brethren, to restore the golden wisdom of St. Thomas and spread it as far as you can, for the safety and glory of the Catholic faith, for the good of society, for the increase of all the sciences.¹⁶⁷

Indeed,

There is nothing which We have longer wished for and desired than you should give largely and abundantly to youths engaged in study the pure streams of wisdom which flow from the Angelic Doctor as from a perennial and copious spring.¹⁶⁸

Moreover,

Let teachers carefully chosen by you endeavor to instil the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas in the minds of their hearers and *let them clearly point out its solidity and excellence above all other teaching*.¹⁶⁹

He also gave this grave warning:

Lest the false should be drunk instead of the true; or lest that which is unwholesome should be drunk instead of that which is pure, take care that the wisdom of Thomas be drawn from his own fountain, or at any rate from those streams which, in the certain and unanimous opinion of learned men, yet flow whole and untainted, inasmuch as they are fed from the fountain itself. But take care to shield the minds of youths from streams which are said to have flowed from thence, but in reality have been fed by unhealthy waters from other springs.¹⁷⁰

In this Letter, as he himself often recalled later, he stated and clearly proved,

That the best form of philosophy is that developed by the brilliant genius of St. Thomas Aquinas in such a way that it will never die. For he carefully searched it out in all the works of ancient wisdom.¹⁷¹

What We have often striven to impress upon you before, *We now repeat, that no method of philosophy is more suited to reach the truth or more powerful to destroy growing errors than the method of that blessed and most wise man*.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Allocution to the International Congress of Scholars at Rome, March 7, 1880. Cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 205.

¹⁷² Letter to D. Mercier, President of the Institut Supérieur de Philosophie at the University of Louvain, Jan. 2, 1895, *op. cit.*, 258.

In this way,

While We have recommended adherence to the doctrine of St. Thomas for the deliberate purpose of restoring soundness to philosophy, Our special purpose is to use it as a sword cutting at the root of present evils.¹⁷³

For, by his principles and method of philosophy, he has a marvelous power to illustrate every facet of the truth and destroy every kind of error, even those engendered by the very difficult times in which we live.¹⁷⁴

Therefore,

We propose as a model one in whom virtue and wisdom shine with a maximum of splendor; a man fully imbued with human and divine learning drawn from the treasury of the ages; one celebrated by the praises of the Church and the approval of the Roman Pontiffs; one made equal in mind to the angels.¹⁷⁵

It was with the highest approval that this letter and these recommendations of the Supreme Pastor were received by the Cardinals, Bishops, Superiors of Religious Orders, Faculties of Philosophy, Seminaries and learned Catholic men throughout the world. Representatives sent letters attesting to their admiration of and veneration for the doctrine of St. Thomas. Practically by referendum, Aquinas was recognized and proclaimed as the Prince of Philosophers and Universal Doctor.

Motivated by these letters and by others forwarded to Pius IX, Leo XIII declared St. Thomas Patron of all Universities, Colleges, Lycea and Catholic Schools:

“for they [the letters] have made clear to him as well as to Ourselves that there is inherent in Thomistic doctrine a certain outstanding excellence as well as a phenomenal force and power calculated to cure the evils which afflict our times.”¹⁷⁶

This is the chief and supreme reason which moved the Pontiff to decree for Thomas that,

¹⁷³ Letter to the Bishop of Piacenza, Oct. 9, 1882, *op. cit.*, 223.

¹⁷⁴ Letter to Fr. Coconier, July 12, 1894, *op. cit.*, 257.

¹⁷⁵ Allocution to the International Congress of Scholars, *loc. cit.*

¹⁷⁶ Brief *Cum hoc sit*, declaring St. Thomas Aquinas Patron of Catholic Schools, *loc. cit.*, 110.

St. Thomas is preeminent among all. Catholic men regard him as the exemplar in the various branches of knowledge. Indeed, magnificent ornaments of mind and soul, inviting imitation by others, are all present in him: *complete, pure and well-ordered doctrine; obedience to the faith and the finest harmony with divinely revealed truths; integrity of life united with the splendor of the greatest virtues.*¹⁷⁷

Nor was the Roman Pontiff satisfied with these solemn pronouncements. Great energy and purpose marked his continuous efforts to recommend the doctrine of Aquinas. He founded the Roman Academy named after St. Thomas

to explain and expound his work; to set forth his opinions and compare them with the opinions of ancient and modern philosophers; to show the force of his opinions and his reasons for them; to strive to spread his salutary doctrine and apply it both to the refutation of modern errors and to those which would arise in the future.

He was careful to see that in the Roman Faculties and Seminaries “philosophical studies according to the mind and principles of the Angelic Doctor were being cherished and taught simply, clearly and fully.”¹⁷⁹ By his own order and at his own expense he published a new critical edition “which embraces all the writings of the holy Doctor,” together with the commentaries of Cajetan and Ferrariensis on the *Summa Theologiae* and the *Summa contra Gentiles*, through which, “as through many rivulets, the doctrine of this great man might flow.”¹⁸⁰ He continually urged Bishops, Religious Superiors and all scholars throughout the Catholic world to do likewise in the seminaries and schools under their care:

Endeavor to spread further every day the doctrine of such a great master; in studying his doctrine keep this regulation in mind, that *you should embrace any given opinion because it recommends*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁷⁸ Letter to Cardinal de Luca, *de Romana S. Thomae Academia*, Oct. 15, 1879, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 197.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 199, 200.

*itself freely to you on account of his wonderful propriety and simplicity of speech, and not because you have been perhaps persuaded by some prejudiced opinion foreign to common and approved doctrine.*¹⁸¹

To the President and Students of the Academy of St. Thomas at Parma he wrote:

You can choose no safer guide for your work than St. Thomas, whose shining sanctity joined with brilliant genius and penetration surpassing the human level, has earned for him the fitting tribute of Angelic Doctor;¹⁸² and he seems to have abundantly filled the measure of that name.¹⁸³

In him are all the qualities which establish him as the Guide and Teacher of a healthy and true philosophy. He has the correct method of philosophy; philosophical doctrine which is sound, mature, strong and safe; universal and fruitful principles touching the chief problems of all times and offering the answers to them; a compact, clear, serious style; an understanding manner toward all philosophers, yet with perfect freedom to disapprove of their opinions and advance others; and the finest harmony with divinely revealed truth.

His philosophical method. His doctrine “always retains its great power to stimulate wisely the minds of men.”¹⁸⁴

It was for this reason that We have advised and frequently and seriously urged that the works of the great Aquinas be kept at hand and continuously and fittingly expounded . . . because *the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor has been wonderfully fashioned to form minds and is equally useful for a commentator, philosopher or one who would dispute succinctly and invincibly*: he clearly proves individual points, one depending upon the other in a continuous series. He shows that all of them are connected and joined one with another. He relates them all to one basic principle; then he lifts one up to the contemplation of God, Who is the efficient

¹⁸¹ Allocution to the Int. Congress of Scholars, *loc. cit.*, 206.

¹⁸² Letter of June 21, 1880, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 208.

¹⁸³ Letter to Cardinal de Luca, *op. cit.*, 197.

¹⁸⁴ Letter to the Bishops of the provinces of Milan, Turin and Vercelli, Jan. 25, 1882, *op. cit.*, 222.

cause, source, and archetype of all things, to Whom all philosophy, and indeed every man, should be related.¹⁸⁵

He is strong in his praise of B. Lorenzelli who had already dedicated himself entirely to the teaching of Aquinas, stating that he set forth Thomas' method of treatment and admirable system of philosophy, in which he excelled, in his *Philosophiae Theoreticae Institutiones*.¹⁸⁶ He also sent hearty congratulations to the Professors of the Faculty of Philosophy of Catholic University in Washington:

*Especiallly because they purposely maintain in its entirety the established system of philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas according to Our precept and religiously follow him as guide.*¹⁸⁷ Wisdom in philosophy is exactly proportioned to the degree in which Thomas is followed.¹⁸⁸ For his is the truest and most suitable of all the systems of philosophy and We wish all to use that system whether they are teaching or learning.¹⁸⁹

The body of his doctrine is solid, mature, strong and safe.

His doctrine is so inclusive that he has embraced within himself as in a sea all the wisdom flowing from the ancients. Whatever truth was spoken or discussed by pagan philosophers, by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, by great men who lived before him, he not only thoroughly investigated but augmented, perfected and disposed with such a clear penetration of ideas, such an accurate system of argumentation, such an economy of speech, that he appears only to have left the power to imitate but not to excel. . . . He stands invincible, strengthening his arguments by the force of reason, and striking great terror in the minds of his adversaries.¹⁹⁰

His full and fruitful principles embrace the special problems of all times and offer their solution.

¹⁸⁵ *Officio sanctissimo*, Encyclical Letter to the Bavarian Hierarchy, December 22, 1887, *op. cit.*, 234.

¹⁸⁶ Letter of Dec. 3, 1895, *op. cit.*, 261.

¹⁸⁷ Letter to Cardinal Gibbons, June 29, 1895, *op. cit.*, 260.

¹⁸⁸ Letter to Cardinal Bataglini, Nov. 20, 1890, *op. cit.*, 239.

¹⁸⁹ Letter to Cardinal Deschamps, Dec. 25, 1880, *op. cit.*, 215.

¹⁹⁰ Brief *Cum hoc sit*, *loc. cit.*, 112.

This is an outstanding point about his doctrine, that, being based upon and arranged according to principles which have the widest extension, it is not limited to one period only but is adaptable to the needs of all times, and is especially suited to overcome the constant rise of error.¹⁹¹

The Angelic Doctor, in his speculations, drew certain philosophical conclusions as to the reasons and principles of created things. These conclusions have the very widest reach, and contain, as it were, in their bosom the seeds of truths well-nigh infinite in number. These have to be unfolded with most abundant fruits in their own time by the teachers who come after him. As he used his method of philosophy, not only in teaching the truth, but also in refuting error, he has gained this prerogative for himself. With his own hand he vanquished all errors of ancient times; and still he supplies an armory of weapons which brings us certain victory in the conflict with falsehoods ever springing up in the course of years.¹⁹²

His style is serious, succinct and clear.

He employs a quiet style and serious manner of speech, not only when he is teaching a truth and composing an argument but also when pursuing and pressing upon his adversaries.¹⁹³

Very recently Pius XII proposed this form of argumentation to philosophers for imitation:

Proceed strictly according to his method, for he always defined the content and limits of his opinions, without useless verbiage, but with sober and solid expression and evident precision.¹⁹⁴

For this reason he praised the celebrated Anthony Muratori who possessed a similar style of presentation:

he discarded that inflated form of writing then in vogue as well as bombastic, fancy and lengthy forms of expression which were also frequently employed; instead he fashioned for his use a style and

¹⁹¹ *Aeterni Patris, loc. cit.*, 62.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Letter to Cardinal Deschamps and the Belgian Bishops, Aug. 3, 1881, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 220.

¹⁹⁴ Allocution to the Third Int. Thomistic Congress, *loc. cit.*, 735.

type of writing which was unadorned yet compact, strong and penetrating.¹⁹⁵

His gentleness toward every philosopher coupled with a perfect freedom to disagree and to bring forward some new solution. So, that philosophy of the greatest of all philosophers, Aristotle,

the Angelic Doctor interpreted in an uniquely brilliant manner. He made that philosophy Christian when he purged it of the errors into which a pagan writer could easily fall; he used these very errors in his exposition and vindication of Catholic truth. Among the important advances which the Church owes to the great Aquinas this certainly should be included, that so nicely did he harmonize Christian truth with the enduring peripatetic philosophy that he made Aristotle cease to be an adversary and become, instead, a militant supporter for Christ.¹⁹⁶

Indeed, one should embrace the truths discovered by others in such a way that new truths are sought at the same time.

It is true that in these days too many find their praise for genius in a contempt for antiquity; nevertheless, *that is evidently the best system of philosophy which endeavors by rational procedure to discover new truths without at the same time discarding the wisdom of the ancients.*¹⁹⁷

The marvelous harmony with divinely revealed truths.

The holy Doctor clearly proves that truths springing from the natural order cannot contradict those which are believed by faith: consequently, the support and cultivation of the Christian faith is not a mean and servile function of reason, but rather its noble obedience by which the mind is aided and educated in a loftier realm of truth. Finally, science and faith both coming from God should not exercise a rivalry of dissension but, bound together by the ties of friendship, should offer help to each other. An outstanding example of this wonderful harmony and concordance is

¹⁹⁵ Letter to the Archbishop of Modena, Feb. 15, 1950. *AAS* 42 (1950) 297.

¹⁹⁶ Brief *Gravissime nos*, to the Jesuit Fathers, Dec. 30, 1892, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 247.

¹⁹⁷ Letter to the publisher Louis Vives on the occasion of his new edition of the works of St. Albert the Great, Dec. 10, 1889, *op. cit.*, 237.

found in all the writings of St. Thomas. In them that harmony shines brilliantly; at one time reason predominates, with faith leading the way in the investigation of nature; at another time faith takes the lead defended and supported by reason, in such a way that each maintains inviolate its proper force and dignity. When a problem so demands, both join together, having made a compact, as it were, to destroy the enemies of each.¹⁹⁸

Hence the best philosophers are they who join philosophical study with the obedience of the Christian Faith. Thus the brightness of Christian truths falls on the mind, and by that brightness the understanding itself is helped. This takes nothing from the dignity of the reason; nay, rather, it adds to the reason a great deal of grandeur and subtlety and strength.¹⁹⁹

Therefore, *those who wish to be true philosophers . . . should take the principles and foundations of their doctrine from Thomas Aquinas.*²⁰⁰ To follow his leadership is praiseworthy: ²⁰¹ on the contrary, to depart foolishly and rashly from the wisdom of the Angelic Doctor is something far from Our mind and fraught with peril . . . the name of Thomas . . . should be held sacred by all.²⁰²

But if other authors “should depart from the doctrine of the Common Doctor, there must be no dispute as to which is the right way,” namely, the way of Aquinas.²⁰³

Further, to follow Thomas as guide is not only a laudable privilege but a duty as well, and a most pressing duty at that:

For those who apply themselves to the teaching and study of Theology and Philosophy *should consider it their capital duty, having left aside the findings of a fruitless philosophy, to follow St. Thomas Aquinas and to cherish him as their master and their leader.*²⁰⁴

Let it be a law for teachers as well as students to follow Thomas

¹⁹⁸ Brief *Cum hoc sit*, *loc. cit.*

¹⁹⁹ *Aeterni Patris*, *loc. cit.*, 54.

²⁰⁰ Letter to the Minister General of the Friars Minor, Nov. 25, 1898, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 264.

²⁰¹ Letter to Bishop Haine, Aug. 8, 1899, *ibid.*

²⁰² Letter to the Minister General O. F. M., *loc. cit.*

²⁰³ *Gravissime nos*, *op. cit.*, 248.

²⁰⁴ Letter to the Bishop of Verdun, Oct. 1, 1901. *Acta VI*, 273-274.

*Aquinas as their guide and cherish and protect his doctrine from all impurity.*²⁰⁵

In no sense is this to be construed as a curtailment of one's freedom to investigate truth. Rather it directs that liberty in a safe manner and preserves it intact.

Human reason should exercise a *free* hand in its effort to penetrate to the interior and hidden knowledge of things, nor can it be otherwise; indeed, *following Aquinas as leader and guide it does so more freely and expeditiously, because then reason acts most securely since it is entirely free from the danger of exceeding the safety of the faith.*

You would erroneously call that freedom, which follows and spreads opinions at choice and at random. Rather it is the worst kind of license, lying and false knowledge, the slavery and blight of the soul. Thomas, the wise Doctor, moves within the bounds of truth, for he never takes issue with God, the highest principle of all truth. To Him he always clings and he follows Him most closely as He opens His divine secrets.²⁰⁶ Thomas' doctrine, as it is the most eminent and wholesome of all, approved for secular use and praised above others by the Church, not only does not coerce *the mind but rather supplies pure and salutary food.*²⁰⁷

There is no better course of study, no safer system of philosophy, no stronger instrument for sharpening the mind in its investigation of truth. Leo XIII repeated this again and again at every opportunity. He wrote to Cardinal Deschamps, upon the establishment of a Chair of Thomistic Philosophy at the University of Louvain,

Devote your efforts to studying the masters wisely, to nourishing the important studies vigilantly, and *be definitely assured that the course of studies will be better as it more closely approaches the doctrine of the same Aquinas.*²⁰⁸

We have often said that *the course of studies will be better as it more closely approaches the doctrine of the same Aquinas.*²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ *Motu proprio* instituting the Leonine Commission, Aug. 22, 1897, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 263.

²⁰⁶ Letter to the Bavarian Hierarchy, *loc. cit.*

²⁰⁷ *Gravissime nos*, *loc. cit.*, 246.

²⁰⁸ Letter of Dec. 25, 1880, *op. cit.*, 216.

²⁰⁹ Letter to Fr. De Maria, Jan. 14, 1893, *op. cit.*, 252.

Those, indeed, will become finished and accurate philosophers who have been deeply steeped in the scholastic method and study. We have repeatedly and seriously admonished and mentioned to you on other occasions, that *the course of studies will be better as it approaches more closely to the doctrine of Aquinas.*²¹⁰

In an allocution to the moderators and students of the Seminaries and Faculties of Rome he said:

We seem to have acted with good purpose and opportunity, when, having in mind the acquisition of greater knowledge of things, We recalled the studies of clerics to the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas. In this matter We repeat in your presence today what We have said clearly and repeatedly in Our Letters: *follow the Angelic Doctor as guide and teacher; consider yourselves, beloved sons, to have come closer to doctrinal excellence as you devote more effort and study to him.*²¹¹

His successor, *Pius X*, commanded exact observance of all these prescripts:

We take the lead in saying that all those regulations must be religiously observed which Our illustrious predecessor determined in the study of Thomistic philosophy and doctrine, and We shall take care to promote the hope for even greater fruit.²¹²

And therefore,

All who teach philosophy in Catholic schools throughout the world . . . , *should take care never to depart from the path and method of Aquinas, and to insist upon that procedure more vigorously every day.*²¹³

He gives special advice on this matter to the Catholic Institutes in France²¹⁴ and specifically to the Institute at Paris:

²¹⁰ Letter to Cardinal Goosens on the Institut Supérieur de Philosophie at Louvain, March 7, 1894, *op. cit.*, 256.

²¹¹ Allocution of Jan. 18, 1885, *op. cit.*, 226.

²¹² Apostolic Letter *In praecipuis* on the Roman Academy of St. Thomas, *loc. cit.*, 126.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ Circular Letter of the Sacred Congregation of Studies to the Rectors of the Catholic Institutes of Angers, Lyons, Lisle, Paris and Toulouse, Sept. 10, 1906. *Acta*, II, 291-292.

On the subject of philosophy We wish you never to allow that the regulations providentially set forth by Our predecessor in the Encyclical *Aeterni Patris* be less strictly observed in your seminaries. *This is a matter of very great consequence for the protection and safety of the faith.*

It is not enough to imbue the students for Sacred Orders with that philosophy corresponding to the official programs of the State, but they should be more fully and deeply instructed “according to the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas so that they can receive solid knowledge of sacred theology and biblical science.”²¹⁵

He suggested the same thing more solemnly in his Encyclical Letter *Pascendi dominici gregis* of Sept. 8, 1907 against the doctrines of the Modernists, especially in the field of metaphysics.

In the matter of studies We wish and at this time command that Scholastic philosophy be made the basis for sacred studies . . . Specifically when We prescribe that Scholastic philosophy is to be followed We mean especially that philosophy which is taught by Thomas Aquinas: *We state that whatever was sanctioned by Our predecessor on this point is still in force, and whatever We have done by way of encouragement and confirmation, We order that it be followed by all religiously.* It is the business of the bishops, in whatever seminaries these points have been neglected, to see what they are encouraged and required hereafter. We prescribe the same for Moderators of Religious Orders. *We warn teachers to keep this religiously in mind, especially in metaphysics, that to disregard Aquinas cannot be done without suffering great harm.*²¹⁶

He repeated this in his *Motu proprio Sacrorum Antistitum*, especially insisting upon a faithful and strict adherence to Aquinas in metaphysics.

We warn teachers to keep this religiously in mind, that *disregarding Aquinas even slightly cannot be done without great harm.* A small error in the beginning, to use the words of Aquinas in the prologue to his *De ente et essentia*, becomes very great in the end.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Letter to the Episcopal Patrons of the Catholic Institute of Paris, May 6, 1907, *Acta*, III, 58, 60.

²¹⁶ *Acta*, III, 160.

²¹⁷ Sept. 1, 1910. *AAS* 2 (1910), 656-657.

This was his particular point in the *Motu proprio Doctoris Angelici* of June 29, 1914, where he complained of the false understanding with which some have interpreted preceding decrees, as though one might follow any Scholastic doctor indiscriminately, though the doctrine is foreign to the doctrine of Thomas and even opposed to it. He scored this error and commanded that Thomas alone be followed, especially in metaphysics, which treats of the principles and major propositions of the whole Christian philosophy. These principles truly contain the quintessence of the perennial wisdom, which was discovered with much labor by the finest minds of the whole human race. Therefore, it is a terrible thing to despise these principles, and they must rather be religiously observed. If they are neglected, theologians would put forth vain effort to protect the faith or to understand any of its dogmas.

These are the famous words of the Pontiff himself:

When We recommended that the philosophy of Aquinas “particularly” but not “exclusively” be followed, some persuaded themselves that they were acting in conformity with Our will, or at least not actively opposing it, in the indiscriminate adoption of and adherence to the philosophical opinions of some other Scholastic doctor, though they be repugnant to the principles of St. Thomas. They were greatly deceived. It is very clear that when We set up Thomas as the chief guide in scholastic philosophy, We desired this to be understood above all as referring to those principles upon which that philosophy is based as its foundation. For just as the opinion of certain ancients is to be rejected which holds that what one thinks of the nature of creation makes no difference to the truth of faith so long as his opinions on the nature of God are sound, because error about created things begets a false knowledge of God; so the principles of philosophy developed by Aquinas must be preserved sacred and intact, for by those principles that knowledge of created things is uncovered which is not congruent with faith, and all the errors of all times are refuted. Thus, certain knowledge can be had of those attributes which are proper to God and to no one else, and the diversity and analogy existing between God and His works can be wonderfully illustrated . . .

Moreover, if We speak of these principles of Thomas in general and as a whole, We must declare that his doctrine contains only

those principles which the most eminent philosophers and Doctors of the Church discovered through prolonged reflection and discussion regarding the particular reasons determining human knowledge, the nature of God and creation, the moral order, and the pursuit of the goal of human life. Such brilliant patrimony of wisdom which he inherited from those before him, he perfected and augmented by the almost angelic quality of his mind. Then he applied it to prepare, illustrate and protect sacred doctrine in the minds of men. Sound reason cannot neglect such wisdom, nor can religion suffer it to be diminished in the slightest.

And this is the more true, since, if Catholic truth were once deprived of this strong bulwark, one would seek in vain for assistance for its defense from those philosophies whose principles are either common to or at least not opposed to materialism, monism, pantheism, socialism, and other modern errors. For *the main points in the philosophy of St. Thomas should not be considered as opinions about which it is legitimate to argue*, but are rather foundations upon which all knowledge of natural and divine things is based. When these foundations are removed or weakened, it necessarily follows that students of sacred studies cannot perceive even the meaning of the words which are used by the Teaching Church to propose divinely revealed dogmas.

And so We have desired that all who are engaged in the task of teaching philosophy and sacred theology be warned that they cannot depart from Aquinas in the slightest degree, especially in metaphysics, without great harm resulting therefrom.

Moreover, We declare further that those who perversely interpret or entirely despise the principles and major theses of his philosophy are not only not following Thomas but have wandered very far from the holy Doctor. *And if the doctrine of any other writer or saint was ever approved by Ourselves or Our predecessors with singular praise and the invitation or command to spread and to defend it were added to that commendation, it must be clearly understood that that doctrine is approved to the extent that it agreed with the principles of Aquinas or at least in no way contradicted them.*²¹⁸

With these points in mind, some teachers in various Institutes and Faculties,—the Order of Preachers was not represented among them,—proposed twenty-four theses to the Sacred Con-

²¹⁸ *Loc. cit.*, 337-338.

gregation of Studies for examination. They were accustomed to propose and to teach these theses, having drawn them from the doctrine of St. Thomas as the chief principles of the holy Teacher, especially in metaphysics.²¹⁹

When these were duly submitted to the Supreme Pontiff and carefully examined, the Sacred Congregation replied that they clearly contained the principles and major propositions of the holy Doctor.²²⁰ The theses were grouped into the various branches of philosophy. Seven referred to Ontology, five to Cosmology, nine to Biology and Psychology and three to Theodicy.²²¹

Meanwhile, Cardinal Merry del Val, in the name of the Pope, congratulated Fr. Peillaube, Rector of the Seminary of St. Thomas Aquinas at the Catholic Institute of Paris, on "the cult of the Angel of the Schools, whose incomparable doctrine the Sovereign Pontiff has glorified anew."²²²

To Humbert Everest, O. P. under whose auspices the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas was translated into English, he wrote:

To publish the immortal works of Aquinas is the same as divulging in writing the most complete human and divine knowledge, and offering to everyone desirous of knowledge the best method of philosophy to unlock sacred truths and effectively to destroy errors.²²³

And so it is only right that we read in the eulogy of Pius X, placed at the foot of his coffin: "he zealously promoted the teaching of Thomas Aquinas."²²⁴

²¹⁹ It is evident that these twenty-four theses were set down by Fr. G. Mattiussi, S. J., with the help of Joseph Biagioli, professor of Dogmatic Theology at the seminary of Fiesole, and by other men who were very learned in and faithful to Thomistic philosophy. When Pius X died Mattiussi wrote and published in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, at the behest of Benedict XV, a commentary on these theses. Later this commentary was separately published: *Le XXIV Tesi della filosofia di San Tommaso d'Aquino approvate dalla S. Congregazione degli Studi*, Rome, 1917. Cf. Tit. Sante Centi, O. P. in *San Tommaso d'Aquino, La Somma Teologica, Introduzione generale*, 268-272. Florence, 1949.

²²⁰ July 27, 1914, AAS (1914), 383-384.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 384-386.

²²² Letter of July 16, 1914. AAS 6 (1914), 472.

²²³ Letter of Feb. 24, 1912. AAS 4 (1912), 164-165.

²²⁴ AAS 6 (1914), 430.

After the death of Pius X difficulty arose concerning the twenty-four philosophical theses, which the Sacred Congregation of Studies had declared contained the genuine doctrine of St. Thomas. The difficulty was proposed in this form:

Do the twenty-four philosophical theses approved by the Sacred Congregation of Studies really contain the genuine doctrine of St. Thomas, and if so, should Catholic schools be obliged to subscribe to them?

The Sacred Congregation gave this response: "All the twenty-four philosophical theses express the genuine doctrine of St. Thomas, and they are proposed as safe directive norms."²²⁵

In other words: Catholic schools should not be obliged to subscribe to them, yet *these theses should be proposed in those schools as safe directive norms which should be followed*, namely, "as the doctrine preferred by the Church," as *Benedict XV*, who ratified this response, himself explained to Fr. Hugon, O.P., and as the latter related in his work *Les vingt-quatre thèses thomistes*, p. VII (Paris: Téqui, 1922).

The new Pontiff constantly desired that the prescripts of Leo XIII and Pius X on the faithful and religious adherence to the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas be followed and observed, for his is the philosophy according to Christ.

Along with Our predecessors We are equally persuaded that the only philosophy worth our efforts is that which is *according to Christ* (Colos. II, 8). Therefore, *the study of philosophy according to the principles and system of Aquinas must certainly be encouraged* so that the explanation and invincible defense of divinely revealed truth may be as full as human reason can make it. And so, We wish this Academy of St. Thomas to be under Our care not less than it was under the care of Our predecessors.²²⁶

In the statutes of the Academy renewed by order of the Pope in this *motu proprio* is found the following:

The Roman Academy of St. Thomas has this particular purpose, to explain, defend and protect the philosophy of the Angelic Doctor.

²²⁵ March 7, 1916, *AAS* 8 (1916), 157.

²²⁶ *Motu proprio Non multo post, loc. cit.*, 6-7.

Moreover, teachers, at least once every week during the academic year, should read the works of St. Thomas on philosophy, especially the commentaries on Aristotle and Boethius.²²⁷

Thereupon the regulations which should guide the Academy were promulgated.

The purpose of this Academy is to explain, protect and spread the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor especially in philosophy, and follow strictly what was set down in the Encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. The chief works of the Academy are these: to join their studies and forces with the other academies of the same Institute so as to establish Christian philosophy everywhere according to the principles of Aquinas.²²⁸

Mention can be made also of the letter of Cardinal Bisleti, Prefect of this Congregation, to Fr. A. Baudrillart, Rector of the Catholic Institute of Paris, referring to a more intense cultivation of the doctrine of St. Thomas, in which the precepts of Leo XIII, Pius X and Benedict XV on following the theological and philosophical teaching of St. Thomas are recalled and renewed.²²⁹ The Pontiff used every occasion to extol and urge this philosophy as is evident in his letters to Frs. Hugon,²³⁰ J. Simbaldi,²³¹ and L. Theissling.²³² In the Encyclical *In praeclara* of April 30, 1921, he praised Dante who midst a great variety of studies followed especially Thomas Aquinas, Prince of the Schools; following him whose angelic qualities of mind ennobled his own, he learned practically everything he knew in the realm of philosophy and theology.²³³

Pius XI said that Benedict XV especially

was to be praised for having promulgated the Code of Canon Law in which the system, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor are unreservedly sanctioned.²³⁴

²²⁷ Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Studies, March 12, 1915. *AAS* 7 (1915), 128, 129.

²²⁸ Decree of the same Congregation approved by Benedict XV on Feb. 11, 1916. *AAS* 8 (1916), 364.

²²⁹ Sept. 30, 1916. *AAS* (1916), 412-414.

²³² *AAS* 10 (1918), 480.

²³⁰ *AAS* 8 (1916), 174.

²³³ *AAS* 13 (1912), 210.

²³¹ *AAS* 9 (1917), 107.

²³⁴ *Studiorum ducem*, *loc. cit.*, 314.

In canon 1366, § 2 of the Code, promulgated on Pentecost 1917, is found this law:

Professors should by all means treat the studies of rational philosophy and theology, and should train students in these subjects, *according to the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor, and should hold these as sacred.*

Recalling the same precept in a letter to Cardinal Schulte on the founding of the Catholic Institute of Philosophy at Cologne, June 29, 1921, the Pontiff said:

Indeed, nothing could be more salutary and timely than to establish an Institute of true science, i. e., philosophy, where not only solid and safe doctrine may be taught but, in addition, all those matters touching the highest notions of the good and the true may be explained clearly so as to furnish a solution to the various questions which will continually arise. The Philosophy We mean is the scholastic philosophy, which is of principal importance with Catholics. Developed by the holy Doctors, it was brought to such a pinnacle of perfection through the genius of Aquinas that practically no one can raise it any higher. On this point the prescripts of the Roman Pontiffs have been clearly formulated and the Code of Canon Law now embodies them.²⁸⁵

Pius XI took the same course, inviting all to follow his predecessors, and he ordered their injunctions to be observed strictly and sacredly.

What was providentially established in Canon Law on this matter should be inviolably and religiously observed. . . . When they finish the course of arts, our students should study Philosophy for at least two years in order to build a solid foundation for Sacred Theology. The Philosophy We mean is the Scholastic Philosophy developed at the cost of great labor by the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Schools, and advanced to the highest point of its perfection by the work and brilliance of Thomas Aquinas. Our illustrious predecessor, Leo XIII, did not hesitate to call it 'the bulwark of faith and solid fortress of religion' (*Aeterni Patris*). It was to the great praise of Leo that he restored Christian Philosophy, urged by his love for and cultivation of the Angelic Doctor. We will go further and say that of all the things he did during his

²⁸⁵ AAS 13 (1921), 423.

long Pontificate which were useful for the Church and for society, this restoration was of such importance that if he had done nothing else that alone would suffice to commend the name of so great a Pope to immortality.

Therefore, *teachers of Philosophy should consider it a duty of prime importance when teaching this subject to clerics to follow not only the system or method but the doctrine and principles of Thomas as well. They should do this even more eagerly because they know that no Doctor of the Church is so terrifying and formidable [to Modernists and other enemies of the Catholic faith] as Aquinas.*²³⁶

The Pontiff wrote in the same vein to the Moderators of Religious Orders and other societies of religious men:

Hold sacred and inviolate what We have said in Our Apostolic Letter on the matter of Seminaries and clerical studies in conformity with Canon Law, that teachers in explaining the principles of philosophy and theology should faithfully follow the scholastic method according to principles and doctrine of Aquinas.

He called to mind and adopted the famous words of Leo XIII in the Letter *Nostra ergo* of Nov. 25, 1898:

Those who wish to be true philosophers—and surely men ought especially to desire this—should place the bases and foundations of their doctrine in Thomas Aquinas.²³⁷

Indeed, no one ever “better explained the nature and method of philosophy, its parts and force.” Thomas handled these parts “in a way which was proper to each. Starting from those elements which are native to human reason and gradually ascending to others which are more remote, he arrived at the summit of all things.” His propositions on the natural power of the human mind to know truth rooted out the errors of agnosticism. His doctrine on the existence of God as demonstrable from creatures through cause and effect stand today, as in the Middle Ages, as the most solid and strongest of all.²³⁸ In this

²³⁶ Apostolic Letter on Seminaries and Clerical Studies, Aug. 1, 1922. *AAS* 14 (1922), 454-455.

²³⁷ Apostolic Letter *Unigenitus Dei Filius*. *loc. cit.*, 144.

²³⁸ *Studiorum ducem*, *loc. cit.* 316, 317.

letter, as he recalled in an Allocution to the Cardinals on Dec. 20, 1923, he urged all the clergy “especially to follow this leader in their studies.”²³⁹

There is present in the philosophy of St. Thomas,

so to speak, a certain natural Gospel, an incomparably solid foundation for all scientific construction, since the chief characteristic of Thomism is its *objectivity*: its constructions or elevations are not those of a mind cut off from reality, but are constructions of a spirit which follows the real nature of things . . . *The value of Thomistic doctrine will never seem less because this would require that the value of things become less.*²⁴⁰

In a word, the philosophy of Aquinas is the philosophy of the Church of Christ, i. e. “a Christian, Catholic, Roman philosophy.”²⁴¹ Indeed, “as innumerable documents of every kind attest, the Church has adopted his philosophy for her own.”²⁴²

So, he heartily praised Cardinal Mercier for his philosophical writings based on the doctrine of St. Thomas, “namely, Ontology,” and, the Pontiff added:

By your explanation you protect the metaphysical principles of St. Thomas. *To recede from them, even slightly, will cause great harm,* as Our predecessor of happy memory, Pius X, warned.²⁴³

Pius XII recalled all these precepts of his predecessors and “if any precept be wanting anywhere, he restores them in their original force.”²⁴⁴

The perennial philosophy or Christian philosophy which St. Thomas brought to perfection and left at its peak after composing and strengthening it with a marvellous order,²⁴⁵ rests on a solid rock. Perpetually strong and fresh, its fruit will

²³⁹ *AAS ibid.*, 607.

²⁴⁰ *Loc. cit.*, cf. note 16.

²⁴¹ Allocution to preachers and others gathered at Rome for Thomistic Week, Nov. 19-25, 1924. *Acta Hebd. Thom.*, 294, Rome, 1924.

²⁴² *Studiorum ducem, loc. cit.*, 314.

²⁴³ Letter of March 26, 1924. *AAS* 16 (1924), 225.

²⁴⁴ Discourse to the clerical students at Rome, *loc. cit.*; Allocution to the Dominican General Chapter, *loc. cit.*

²⁴⁵ Letter to Fr. Gillet, *loc. cit.*

endure forever. Following its guidance one may safely proceed to a solid knowledge of truth.²⁴⁶

Indeed, the perennial philosophy is a work of great magnitude. To construct that work the flower of wisdom and the learned geniuses raised up by the provident power of God over the centuries have labored. Strong in its perpetual youth, it now grows stronger and continually offers increase to various studies, either when physical studies need deeper investigation, or history needs a more circum-spect treatment, or critical method needs more precision.

But *the palm is reserved for St. Thomas among all the cultivators of scholastic philosophy. He holds primacy of place.* Unique lover of the truth, with what reverence, as truth demands, does he thoroughly consider the things to be known, carefully examining the facts, investigating the texts and documents from which acts and statements are discovered! How adept he is in disposing the parts of his inquiries! What firm strength in his arguments and clear dignity in his language! With conquering fortitude, which loftiness of mind engenders, he proceeds to his conclusions. By his calm and confident development he extracts their conclusions from metaphysical principles which are the common heritage of Christian wisdom for all ages.²⁴⁷

Going further in his Encyclical *Humani Generis* of August 12, 1950, he adds:

This is that healthy philosophy which stands as the heritage from previous Christian times, and it enjoys a higher order of authority, because the very Teaching Authority of the Church weighs her principles and assertions, gradually clarified and defined by men of genius, in the balance of divine revelation itself. This philosophy, recognized and accepted by the Church, protects the true and genuine validity of human knowledge, the unshakable metaphysical principles of sufficient reason, causality and finality, and ultimately the mind's ability to attain certain and immutable truth.

In this philosophy many things are explained which touch faith and morals neither directly nor indirectly, and these the Church leaves to free discussion of learned men. As for many other matters, especially the principles and chief tenets which We have

²⁴⁶ Allocution to the Dominican General Chapter, *loc. cit.*

²⁴⁷ Allocution to the Third International Thomistic Congress at Rome, *loc. cit.*, 374-375.

mentioned above, the same liberty is not granted. But, even in these essential questions philosophy may be clothed in a more convenient and richer raiment, may be fortified with more precise distinction, may be divested of less useful scholastic aids, may be prudently enriched with the fruits of the progress of the human mind; but never may it be overthrown or poisoned with false principles or be regarded as a great, but obsolete, relic. Truth and its philosophic expression cannot change daily, especially in the realm of the self-evident principles of the human mind, or of those opinions which lean upon both the wisdom of the ages and the support and approbation of divine revelation. Whatever new truth the human mind can find in its sincere quest can hardly be opposed to truth already discovered, since God, the highest Truth, has created and guides the human mind, not that it may daily oppose new truths to those already established, but, having removed the errors which possibly have crept in, it may build truth upon truth in the same order and structure found in reality, the source of truth. The Christian philosopher and theologian should not, therefore, embrace eagerly and lightly whatever novelty is thought up from day to day. Rather, they should weigh it with the greatest care and a balanced judgment, so as not to lose or corrupt the truth already acquired, with consequent grave danger and harm to the faith.

If one has a true perspective in these matters, he will readily see why the Church requires that future priests be instructed in philosophy ‘according to the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor’ (CIC, can. 1366, 2) since, *as the experience of many centuries proves, the method and doctrine of Aquinas is singularly preeminent for teaching students and for investigating obscure truths. His doctrine is in wonderful harmony with divine revelation and is most effective for safeguarding the foundations of the faith as well as for reaping, usefully and safely, the fruits of sound progress.*²⁴⁸

Of such a kind are “those which by their nature are closely connected with the doctrine of faith” and which deal especially with the two philosophical studies, “theodicy and ethics.”²⁴⁹ These do not agree with the tenets of immanentism, idealism, historical or dialectical materialism, nor with existentialism, all of which are opposed to Catholic dogma.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ AAS 42 (1950), 571-573.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 574-575.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 574; Allocution to the pilgrimage to Rome of the teachers and students

Students of sacred studies should receive instruction in many other fields, among which

the study of social questions is of considerable importance; but the greatest effort must be expended in philosophy and theology 'according to the method of the Angelic Doctor' (can. 1366, 2) and to these should be added a knowledge of the needs and errors which afflict our age.²⁵¹

These errors cannot be effectively refuted unless one has thoroughly learned the basic elements of philosophy and theology.

In order that the study of sacred sciences may not unhappily suffer, *We strongly exhort all of you, Venerable Brethren, to watch carefully that the precise regulations which this Apostolic See has laid down for such studies be faithfully received and translated into action.*²⁵²

In this way and in no other will the deposit of Catholic Faith be preserved whole, pure and unharmed, as well as untainted by the tenets of false philosophies.²⁵³

This extended list of documents is more than sufficient to show clearly that *the canonical doctrinal authority of Aquinas in philosophy is the greatest in a unique sense. To no other ecclesiastical writer in the field of philosophy does the Church extend such great approbation and commendation.*

of the Universities and Schools of France, Sept. 20, 1950. *AAS* 42 (1950), 737; Allocation to the General Congress at Rome of all the Religious Orders, Congregations, Societies and Secular Institutes, Dec. 8, 1950. *AAS* 43 (1951), 32, 34.

²⁵¹ *Menti Nostrae*, *loc. cit.*, 687-688.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 688; Discourse to the Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops and other local Ordinaries . . . gathered at Rome, Nov, 2, 1950. *AAS* 42 (1950), 791.

²⁵³ *Humani Generis*, *loc. cit.*, 575; Allocation to the Third Thomistic Congress, *loc. cit.* 735.

III

GENERAL AUTHORITY OF THE ENTIRE BODY OF ST. THOMAS' DOCTRINE

There are distinct categories of St. Thomas' doctrinal authority, namely, scientific and canonical, philosophical and theological, each outstanding and supreme in its own field as well as distinct from the others. Still, these categories may not and should not be separated, but are rather intimately joined in perfect unity. The result is that all of them taken together are as integral parts of one complete and total doctrinal authority. All these parts mutually assist and complete each other, and, arising from this natural harmony between the philosophical and theological and between the scientific and canonical authority of both, we find the *highest authority of the whole and integral body of St. Thomas' doctrine*.

This intimate harmony of reason and faith and consequently of philosophy and theology is extremely clear and distinctly mentioned in the works of St. Thomas. He says of Theology:

This science may receive help from the philosophical sciences, not that it stood in need of them, but only to make its teaching clearer. For it accepts its principles not from other sciences but immediately from God, by revelation. So, it does not depend upon other sciences as upon the higher, but it makes use of them as of the lesser, and as handmaids; even so the master sciences make use of the sciences that supply their materials, as political of military science. That it thus uses them is due not to its own defect or insufficiency but to the defect of our intelligence, which is more easily led by what is known through natural reason (from which the other sciences proceed) to that which is above reason, such as are the teachings of this science.²⁵⁴

It is not the business of Theology to demonstrate the principles of Philosophy but only to weigh their validity in relation to its own proper principles. "Whatever is found in other sciences contrary to any truth of this doctrine must be con-

²⁵⁴ *Summa Theol.*, I, q. 1, a. 5 ad 2.

demned as totally false.”²⁵⁵ So, what does not agree with the truth revealed by God, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived, but rather contradicts the truth, cannot be true, but is false and is to be rejected. Such falsity is totally inept and Theology cannot use it to illustrate and explain its propositions. And so the holy Doctor adds:

Inasmuch as sacred doctrine makes use of the teachings of philosophy for their own sake, *it does not accept them because of the authority of those who taught them but because of the reasonableness of the doctrine; for this reason it accepts such truths and rejects others.*²⁵⁶

This same harmony is apparent in the way in which the Church approves a doctrine, stating that the doctrine has been adopted as her own and commanding that it be followed. All proof previously adduced incontrovertibly demonstrates this. In the Code we find:

Professors shall by all means treat the *studies of rational philosophy and theology*, and shall train students in these subjects *according to the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor, and should hold these as sacred.*²⁵⁷

The philosophy and theology of St. Thomas are at the same time to be held sacred and explained in Catholic schools, not only as to system or method, nor only as to principles or major propositions, but even as to doctrine, i. e., the doctrinal system based on those principles and that method, in such a way that the students “may be instructed in a complete and coherent synthesis of doctrine according to the principles and method of St. Thomas Aquinas.”²⁵⁸

In this matter some declarations of the Popes are much to the point. Leo XIII said:

We propose for imitation a man whose virtue and wisdom shine brilliantly, a man fully imbued with human and divine knowledge

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, a. 6 ad 2.

²⁵⁶ *In Boethii de Trinitate*, q. 2, a. 3 ad 8.

²⁵⁷ Can. 1366, 2.

²⁵⁸ *Deus scientiarum Dominus*, loc. cit., 253.

culled from the fruit of centuries, a man honored by the praises of the Church and the Roman Pontiffs and found equal in mind to the angels.²⁵⁹

Taking this into consideration, devotion to this great and holy man affords the most powerful help to restore *philosophic and theological* learning with consequent great utility for the State.²⁶⁰

Referring to this some years later he said:

We have taken care to restore the studies of philosophy and theology under Thomas' leadership to their time-honored method.²⁶¹ A cleric should grow up with and be exercised in his school of *philosophy and theology*: for he stands forth as the most learned and most capable in holy contests.²⁶² Let each one consider this imposed by law, that Thomas Aquinas should be followed as guide by both Faculties, and let them especially cultivate and safeguard his doctrine.²⁶³

The best preparation will be conscientious application to philosophy and theology under the guidance of St. Thomas Aquinas, and a thorough training therein, as We have pointed out and directed.²⁶⁴

With good reason was he able to write on May 9 in an Encyclical Letter confirming the Constitutions of the Roman Academy of St. Thomas, that,

From the very beginning of Our Pontificate, driven by a knowledge of serious evils, We have often striven that the studies of *Philosophy and Theology* should be reintegrated according to the time-honored scholastic system of St. Thomas, and that the discipline of his scholastic method should be established as handmaid and companion to the truth of faith. We now rightly rejoice that this has been accomplished in practically every Catholic School.²⁶⁵

After the publication of his Encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, the

²⁵⁹ Allocution to an International Congress of scholars at Rome, *loc. cit.*

²⁶⁰ Brief *Cum hoc cit*, *loc. cit.*, 114.

²⁶¹ Letter to Cardinal Parocchi, May 20, 1885, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 226.

²⁶² Encyclical to the Bavarian Hierarchy, *loc. cit.*, 128.

²⁶³ Letter to *La Civiltà Cattolica*, July 8, 1890, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 238.

²⁶⁴ *Providentissimus Deus*, *loc. cit.*, 28.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 259. Cf. also Letter to the quarterly *Divus Thomas*, Feb. 7, 1893, *ibid.*, 253.

foregoing was artistically expressed on a medal struck for the occasion. On the obverse was a likeness of the Pontiff; on the reverse was a likeness of St. Thomas, wearing the doctoral insignia and extending with the right hand his Theology, and with the left his Philosophy. Across the top was this inscription, *The doctrine of Thomas Aquinas restored to its pristine place of honor*, and across the bottom, *Renewal of the covenant between divine and human wisdom*.

Pius X considered it sufficient to recall among many others this one phrase:

Studies in Philosophy, Theology and cognate sciences, especially Sacred Scripture, should be made in conformity with the pontifical directives and the study of Saint Thomas, so often recommended by Our revered predecessor and by Us.²⁶⁶

To discard Aquinas *especially in philosophy and theology*, as We have said, cannot fail to cause great harm. Using his guidance is the safest way to a profound knowledge of divine things.²⁶⁷

Benedict XV who promulgated the regulation now included in the Code of Canon Law deemed it enough to call to mind the words:

It is a sacred and salutary and almost necessary duty to follow Thomas Aquinas as the great teacher in schools where youths are instructed in *philosophy and theology*.²⁶⁸

His philosophy, since it is truly in accord with Christ, can be used safely and with no danger of error, and applied by Sacred Theology, "in order that the explanation and defense of revealed truth may be as full as human reason can make it."²⁶⁹

To this *Pius XI* added:

Teachers of Philosophy should consider it of prime importance in teaching clerics this science to follow the system and method as well as the doctrine and principles of St. Thomas. They will do that even more zealously because they know that no Doctor of

²⁶⁶ Encyclical *Pieni l'animo*, July 28, 1906, ASS (39), 324.

²⁶⁷ Motu proprio *Praeclara*, loc. cit., 335.

²⁶⁸ Letter to Fr. Ed. Hugon, O.P., loc. cit.

²⁶⁹ Motu proprio *Non multo post*, loc. cit., 6.

the Church is so terrifying and formidable to modernists and other enemies of the Catholic faith as Aquinas.

What we say in reference to *Philosophy* is likewise to be understood in the study of *Sacred Theology*. . . . For that which accomplishes the aim of making this study a true science and of giving, as Our predecessor of illustrious memory said, a complete and unshakable explanation of divinely revealed truth is scholastic philosophy under Aquinas' guidance, being put at the disposal of sacred science.²⁷⁰

He repeated these commands to religious men studying for the priesthood:

In treating the principles of philosophy, professors should follow closely the scholastic method according to the principles and doctrines of Aquinas. . . .

How important it is for your students to follow the scholastic method is apparent from the fact that because there is a very close connection between philosophy and revelation, the scholastics themselves joined both in a wonderful harmony, and set forth arguments in such a way that one offers light and important help to the other. Since both come from God, the highest and eternal truth, and one furnishes and explains the truths of reason and the other the documents of faith, they cannot oppose each other, as some have foolishly maintained. Rather, they harmonize so easily that one completes the other. It follows from this that an ignorant and unskilled philosopher will never make a learned theologian. Conversely, one who is entirely barren of divine knowledge will never be a perfect philosopher.

On this point St. Thomas aptly states: 'With the faithful a matter of faith is proved by the principles of faith, just as from self-evident principles a point can be proven to the satisfaction of all. So, theology also is a science.' (*Summa Theol.*, II-II, q. 1, a. 5, ad 3.) To put it in other words, just as philosophy takes its principles of natural knowledge from reason which is a participation of the divine light, and enunciates and explains them, so theology by the light of supernatural revelation which illuminates and fills the intellect with its own light, deals with, develops and explains the notions of faith, just as if they were two rays from the same sun, or two rivers from one source, or a double building on one foundation.

²⁷⁰ Apostolic Letter *Officiorum Omnium*, loc. cit.

Human science is indeed very great as long as it yields to the teachings of faith. But, if they are ignored, then it must necessarily fall into many errors and aberrations.

But, beloved sons, if your students gather to themselves the best of *human* knowledge and apply it to the service and use of sacred doctrine, and if they burn with a love and desire for *divine truth*, they will be, and will be considered, men of God, and will bring much benefit by word and example to Christian people.²⁷¹

Finally, *Pius XII* gives generous praise to the Order of Preachers for its uncommon merit in philosophy and theology, and adds:

You have given Thomas Aquinas, *Common Doctor of these studies*, to the Church. His authority is unique, whether for educating students or in leading the search for hidden truth, and is enunciated by decree in the Code of Canon Law. Of these studies the Angelic Doctor is always a most skilled leader and never-failing light, bringing forth perpetual fruit.²⁷²

In the Encyclical *Humani Generis*, he gives stern warning that not just any philosophy can be used by a theologian as an apt instrument to explain and defend the truths of faith. Only that philosophy may be used which the Church has judged to be true and healthy for secular use, i. e., Christian philosophy under the leadership and teaching of Aquinas. He says:

It is clear that the Church cannot be bound to every system of philosophy that has existed for a short space: but those which through general agreement were composed by Catholic doctors over the course of the centuries to bring about some understanding of dogma are certainly not based upon any such frail foundation. They depend upon principles and notions deduced from the true knowledge of created things. In the deduction of this knowledge, truth divinely revealed has illuminated the human mind through the Church like a star. Therefore it is not at all astonishing that the Ecumenical Councils have not only employed these notions but even sanctioned them in such a way that it is wrong to depart from them.

Wherefore, to neglect or reject or devalue what has been accom-

²⁷¹ Apostolic Letter *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, *loc. cit.*, 144-145.

²⁷² Allocution to the Dominican General Chapter, *loc. cit.*

plished over many centuries by great effort by men of uncommon genius and sanctity under the watchful eye of Mother Church, and with the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit, in order to express ever more accurately the truths conceived, expressed and perfected by the mind, and to replace it with conjectural notions and with some formless and unstable tenets of a new philosophy, which as the flowers of the field are today and are gone tomorrow, this is not only the height of imprudence but it also makes dogma but a reed shaken by the wind.²⁷³ St. Thomas with wonderful cleverness leads the intelligence of men, hesitant and doubtful by reason of the splendor of divine revelation, into the very temple of the mysteries of God. Answering difficulties by the skill of his argumentation, he emphasizes the brilliance and clarity existing in the harmony between *human* and *divine* things.²⁷⁴ So, the greatest importance must be given to *philosophical and theological* teaching according to the method of the Angelic Doctor

in the training of youths.²⁷⁵

Therefore, there can be no doubt that *the complete doctrinal authority of St. Thomas both intrinsic and extrinsic, by the approval and commendation of the Church, is truly the greatest among all ecclesiastical writers in philosophy as well as in theology*. For this “enduring, constant and repeated approval of the Holy See, time after time and even up to the present in a manner at once particularly insistent and always encouraging,” of his philosophical and theological doctrine above all others, is entirely distinctive and was never attributed to anyone else.²⁷⁶

To estimate properly this unique authority one must avoid extremes arising from excess and defect and with the Church hold a proper middle course.

Some err by defect and do not obey the commands of the Church:

²⁷³ *Loc. cit.*, 566-567. Cf. *ibid.*, 571-574.

²⁷⁴ Allocution to the Third International Thomistic Congress, *loc. cit.* 735.

²⁷⁵ *Menti Nostrae, loc. cit.*

²⁷⁶ Cardinal L. Billot, S. J., Discourse delivered on March 11, 1915 in the great hall of the Apostolic Chancery on the occasion of erection of the Academy of St. Thomas, published in *Xenia thomistica*, I, 19, (Rome, 1925).

1. *Those who openly condemn or minimize the philosophical and theological doctrine of Thomas, and attempt to impugn it and to hold it up to derision.* As Pius XII says:

How deplorable it is that this philosophy accepted and honored by the Church is scorned by some and shamefully rejected as being outdated in form and rationalistic in its method of thought. They say that this philosophy of ours upholds the perverse notion that there is an absolutely true metaphysic. And, on the contrary, they hold that reality, especially transcendent reality, cannot better be expressed than by disparate teachings which mutually complete each other, although in a way mutually opposed. So they concede that our traditional philosophy with its clear exposition and solution of questions, its accurate definition of terms, and its clear-cut distinctions, can indeed be useful as a preparation for scholastic theology, though it is more suited to the mentality of the Middle Ages. Yet it does not offer a method of philosophy suited to the needs of modern culture.

Then, they allege that our perennial philosophy is only a philosophy of immutable essences, whereas the modern mind must look to the 'existence' of things, and to life, which is ever in flux. While scorning our philosophy they praise others, ancient and modern, oriental and occidental, by which they seem to imply that any philosophy or theory, graced with a few corrections or additions if need be, can be reconciled with Catholic dogma. No Catholic can doubt that this is entirely false, especially where there is question of those fictitious theories they call immanentism, idealism, historic or dialectical materialism, and even existentialism, whether atheistic or simply the type that denies the validity of reason in metaphysics.

Finally, they reproach the philosophy taught in our schools for regarding only the intellect in the process of cognition and neglecting the function of the will and the emotions. This is simply not true. Christian philosophy has never denied the usefulness and efficacy of good dispositions of soul for perceiving and embracing fully moral and religious truths. In fact, it has always taught the lack of such dispositions can be the reason why the intellect, influenced by the passions and evil inclinations, is so darkened that it cannot see clearly. Indeed, St. Thomas holds that the intellect can in some way perceive higher goods of the moral order, whether natural or supernatural in that it experiences in the soul a certain 'connaturality' with these goods whether this be natural

or the result of grace;²⁷⁷ and it is clear how much even this somewhat obscure knowledge can help reason in its investigations.

But it is one thing to recognize the power of the dispositions of the will in helping reason to reach a more certain and solid knowledge of moral truths; it is quite another to contend, as these innovators do, that the appetitive and affective faculties have a certain power of understanding, and that man, since he cannot decide with certainty based on reason itself what is true and therefore to be embraced, turns to his will, by which he freely chooses among opposite opinions.

It is not at all surprising that these new opinions constitute a dangerous influence for the two philosophical sciences which are by nature closely connected with the doctrine of the faith, namely theodicy and ethics. They maintain that the function of these sciences is not to prove with certitude anything about God or any other transcendental being, but rather to show that what faith teaches about a personal God and His precepts is perfectly consistent with the necessities of life and therefore are to be embraced by all to avoid despair and to attain eternal salvation. All of these opinions are openly contrary to documents of Our predecessors Leo XIII and Pius X, and cannot be reconciled with the decrees of the Vatican Council.

It would be unnecessary to deplore these aberrations from the truth, if all, even in philosophy, directed their attention with proper reverence to the Teaching Authority of the Church. It is the mission of the Church, by divine institution, not only to safeguard and interpret the deposit of divinely revealed truth but also to watch over the philosophical sciences in order to prevent Catholic dogma from being harmed because of erroneous opinions.²⁷⁸

2. *They err by defect and disobey the commands of the Church, who, under any pretext whatever, withdraw from the doctrine of Thomas, or do not study him with proper sincerity, but rather spend their time in looking for his defects, if there are any, and not in attempting to discover his genuine doctrine and to explain it.* As Leo XIII said: “to depart unadvisedly and rashly from the wisdom of the Angelic Doctor is not only against Our will, but is *fraught with danger* as well.”²⁷⁹ Pius X

²⁷⁷ *Summa Theol.*, II-II, q. 1, a. 4, ad 3; q. 45, a. 2.

²⁷⁸ *Humani Generis*, loc. cit., 573-575.

²⁷⁹ Letter to the Minister General O. F. M., loc. cit.

added, "it is true even today that when someone parts company with Thomas, he seems to be ultimately aiming at *parting company with the Church*." ²⁸⁰

Pius XI advised Professors:

To be persuaded that then only will they satisfactorily discharge their duty and Our expectation when, after long and diligent perusal of his writings, they begin to feel an intense devotion for the Doctor Aquinas and by their exposition of him succeed in inspiring their pupils with like fervor and train them to kindle a similar zeal in others. ²⁸¹

Pius XII concludes:

Wherefore, beloved sons, *fill your souls full with love and zeal for St. Thomas: strive with all your powers to perceive his clear doctrine with your minds; freely embrace whatever has a clear connection with it and is supposed by a sound reason in his doctrine*. ²⁸²

St. Augustine wisely set up this law for understanding and interpreting the works of any author—first, that the authors themselves should at least not be despised and, secondly, that they should be loved. "Who ever thought that the obscure and hidden books of Aristotle ought to be interpreted by one of his enemies?" ²⁸³ A man who wrote his works with such labor and care as St. Thomas is especially entitled to the same degree of diligence in one who is studying or explaining him. Otherwise we can suitably apply to him that saying of St. Augustine, "If you believe that I am in error, carefully consider again what was said, lest perhaps you fall into error." ²⁸⁴

3. *They also err by defect who admit the great and powerful authority of St. Thomas for other times, though not for our times which present new problems. According to them the historian of philosophy and theology should attribute a great*

²⁸⁰ Letter to Fr. Th. Pègues, *loc. cit.*

²⁸¹ *Studiorum ducem*, *loc. cit.*, 323.

²⁸² Discourse to the clerical students at Rome, *loc. cit.*

²⁸³ *De utilitate credendi*, cap. 6, no. 18, *ML* 42, 74.

²⁸⁴ *De dono perseverantiae*, cap. 24, no. 68, *ML* 45, 1034.

position to him in noting the doctrines of the Middle Ages, but the modern philosopher and theologian should recognize only his archaeological value.

On the contrary Leo XIII asserted:

This is a great accomplishment, that his doctrine is founded upon and provided with principles enjoying the widest possible extension, *is fitted to the needs* not alone of one particular age but of *all ages*, and is especially accommodated to the destruction of errors which perpetually arise.²⁸⁵

Benedict XV wrote:

The Apostolic See's famous praises of Thomas Aquinas allow no Catholic to doubt that he was divinely raised up *that the Church might have a Teacher whose doctrine should be followed for all time*; ²⁸⁶ a Teacher indeed and a Doctor who never grows old.²⁸⁷

St. Thomas, in the words of Pius XII, "is *always* a most skilful guide and a *never-failing light*"; the structure he has erected "is living perpetually, above and beyond all time, and is even now a strong and powerful bulwark to protect the deposit of Catholic faith."²⁸⁸ Therefore, it is never lawful "to overthrow [even one of his philosophical doctrines] or contaminate it with false principles, or regard it as a great, but obsolete relic."²⁸⁹

4. *They err by defect who acknowledge and praise the supreme authority of St. Thomas by words, and state that it is valid even in our time, but deny and disparage his authority by deeds, insofar as they consider it to be merely symbolic, as if Thomas was not a singular individual person but represented all scholastic writers indifferently. And so that highest doctrinal authority would affect scholastic doctrine indistinctly, and not especially the doctrine of Thomas himself, though it would*

²⁸⁵ *Cum hoc sit, loc. cit.*, 112.

²⁸⁶ Letter to Fr. Pègues, *loc. cit.*, cf. note 119.

²⁸⁷ Letter of Pius X to Fr. Hugon O.P., July 16, 1913, AAS 5 (1913), 487.

²⁸⁸ Allocution to the Dominican General Chapter, *loc. cit.*

²⁸⁹ *Humani generis, loc. cit.*, 572.

be named after Thomas since he was the most outstanding of the scholastics; or even if they accept him really and as himself, they equate his authority with that of other ecclesiastical writers in such a way that Thomas' authority and that of these others is practically the same. So there is no special obligation to follow Aquinas as guide, but rather every kind of liberty is given in a sort of eclectic manner to embrace several kinds of doctrine at once, even including contrary doctrines.

Indeed, as they say, the doctrine of St. Thomas is held up by the Roman Pontiffs as safe and sound; yet this does not prevent the doctrine of other writers, though inconsistent with and contrary to Aquinas' teaching from being called safe and sound. Indeed, it may be safer and sounder! It is merely scholastic doctrine that is being approved and commanded by the Church when she extolls Aquinas, rather than Thomistic doctrine.

Such people have sadly deceived themselves. The documents of the Church clearly and positively exclude opinions of this kind. It is sufficient to refer to only a few among a great number.

Leo XIII said:

When We declare that one should receive with a willing and glad mind whatever has been wisely said, or whatever is profitable no matter by whom it is discovered or thought out, We exhort all of you, Venerable Brethren, with the greatest earnestness for the safety and glory of the Catholic faith, for the good of society, and for the increase of all knowledge, to restore the golden Wisdom of St. Thomas and to spread it as widely as possible.

We said the wisdom of St. Thomas, for it is not by any reason in Our mind to set before this age, as a standard, those things which may have been inquired into by scholastic doctors with too great subtlety or taught with too little consideration, not agreeing with the investigations of a later age; or, lastly, anything that is not probable. Let these teachers carefully chosen by you do their best to instill the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas into the minds of their hearers; and let them point out clearly its solidity and excellence above all other teaching.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ *Aeterni Patris, loc. cit., 72, 74.*

He wrote to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus that they should not be so engaged in the study of their own authors as to withdraw in the slightest from the cultivation of the true teaching of St. Thomas, in which they should be uniform. Such uniformity

is impossible unless the students of the Society adhere to *one* author, i. e. one already approved, concerning whom there is *one* precept [in the laws of the Society] ‘ they shall follow *St. Thomas* and consider him as their own proper doctor ’. It follows then that if any of those authors [of the Society] whom We have praised, disagree with the doctrine of the Common Doctor [namely, St. Thomas,] there should be no doubt as to which is the right path to follow,

namely, the path of Aquinas.²⁹¹

To the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor he wrote:

The name of Thomas should be held sacred by all the children of St. Francis and they should be fearful if they fail to take as their guide him of whom Jesus Christ said that he had written well of Him.²⁹²

Pius X complained that some misunderstood him when he said that the philosophy of Aquinas should be *chiefly followed* ²⁹³ He stated that because he said *chiefly* but not *uniquely*:

Certain persons persuaded themselves that they were acting in conformity with Our will or at any rate not actively opposing it, in adopting indiscriminately and adhering to the philosophical opinions of any other Doctor of the School, *even though such principles were contrary to the principles of St. Thomas*. They are completely mistaken. For, if the doctrine of any author or saint has even been approved by Us or by Our predecessors with singular commendation joined with an invitation and order to propagate and to defend it, it may be clearly understood that it was commended only insofar as it agreed with the principles of Aquinas, or was in no way opposed to them.²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Brief *Gravissime nos*, *loc. cit.*, 248.

²⁹² *Loc. cit.*

²⁹³ Motu proprio *Sacrorum Antistitum*, *loc. cit.*

²⁹⁴ Motu proprio *Doctoris Angelici*, *loc. cit.*, 336, 338.

Far from permitting the doctrine of St. Thomas to degenerate into some weak, amorphous scholastic relic, this injunction must be obeyed in reference to it:

In teaching the precepts of philosophy and theology, teachers should follow faithfully the scholastic method *according to the principles and doctrine of Aquinas*.²⁹⁵

St. Thomas' authority in both philosophy and theology is entirely unique: ²⁹⁶ Among all the doctors of scholastic philosophy *the palm is reserved for St. Thomas, and he holds a principal position*.²⁹⁷

Moreover, the doctrine of St. Thomas is not only approved and commended by the Church as merely safe and sound, rather it is safer and sounder than the rest, indeed, it is the safest, soundest and surest.

St. Pius V said of St. Thomas that "his theological doctrine accepted by the Catholic Church is *more safe and sound than the rest*: " ²⁹⁸ for he is "the *surest rule* of Christian doctrine." ²⁹⁹

Benedict XIV recalled and adopted the words of Clement VIII who said that Thomas wrote his works *without any error at all*; and added that it can consequently be followed *without any danger of error*.³⁰⁰ Further, he commanded:

That henceforth none of the masters or lecturers of the College of St. Denis may explain, teach and read to their students any other doctrine, especially in theology, beside the sole doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas.³⁰¹

Leo XIII praised his pure doctrine. For:

Whatever truth was enunciated or reasonably discussed by pagan philosophers, by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, by

²⁹⁵ Pius XI, Apostolic Letters, *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, *loc. cit.*, 144; *Officiorum omnium*, *loc. cit.*, 454-455; Pius XII, *Humani generis*, *loc. cit.*, 572-573.

²⁹⁶ Pius XII, Allocution to the Dominican General Chapter, *loc. cit.*

²⁹⁷ Allocution to the Third Thomistic Congress, *loc. cit.*, 734.

²⁹⁸ To the Master of the Sacred Palace, July 29, 1570, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 99.

²⁹⁹ Constitution *Mirabilis Deus*, April 11, 1567, *ibid.*, 98.

³⁰⁰ Brief of Aug. 2, 1756. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 156.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

learned men who lived before him, he not only thoroughly knew, but even increased, perfected and expanded.³⁰²

It is that

which the fulsome praises of the Roman Pontiffs and Councils commended, and which by the vote of the ages *leaves nothing to be desired of a more firm and fruitful nature*.³⁰³ Domestic and civil society, which We perceive is in danger to the degree that it is persuaded by perverse ideas, would be immediately much more peaceful and secure if in universities and schools that doctrine were taught which is *healthier and more in accord with the Teaching Authority of the Church*. Such doctrine is contained in the volumes of Thomas Aquinas.³⁰⁴

St. Thomas has the *surest* method for philosophy.³⁰⁵ His method of philosophy is “the *truest and most suitable of all*,” and “We wish all to use it in both teaching and learning.”³⁰⁶ For,

Human reason has an innate inclination to reach to the interior and hidden knowledge of things, and it cannot will otherwise; it follows this inclination much *more freely and easily* when Thomas is its teacher and guide, because then *it acts most safely without any possibility of exceeding the bounds of truth*.³⁰⁷

Pius X said:

His golden doctrine illuminates the mind with its brilliance and by its use reason attains the deepest knowledge of divine things *without any danger of error*.³⁰⁸

To discard Aquinas, especially in philosophy and theology, as We have said, is very harmful; *following him is the safest path to a profound knowledge of divine things*.³⁰⁹

We urge you always to consider it a sacred and a solemn duty to

³⁰² Brief *Cum hoc sit*, *loc. cit.* 112.

³⁰³ Letter *Gravissime nos*, *loc. cit.*, 244.

³⁰⁴ *Aeterni Patris*, *loc. cit.*, 70.

³⁰⁵ Letter to Cardinal Gibbons, *loc. cit.*

³⁰⁶ Letter to Cardinal Deschamps, *loc. cit.*

³⁰⁷ Encyclical *Officio sanctissimo*, *loc. cit.*

³⁰⁸ *Motu proprio Praeclara*, *loc. cit.*, 334.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 335.

follow Thomas as guide in philosophy, and in the discussion of divine things. In this way, midst the excitement about studies, *you will never wander from the rule of Christian truth*; there are a great many such aberrations today, because there is an imprudent indulgence in each one's own judgment or in the unproved authority of certain men.³¹⁰ *In this matter there can be no safer course than to follow Thomas as guide.* Those who gave written treatises on divine things according to his mind have drawn from him much light and solidity.³¹¹

If, therefore, the doctrine of Thomas is safer and has been declared and praised as the safest, other doctrines inconsistent with or even contradictory to it cannot be or be called equally safe, let alone safest. Comparatives and superlatives exclude the same grade of perfection or quality in others, as we know from the very grammatical meaning of the words: “*no doctrine can be found which is safer,*” as we have just heard from the mouth of Pius X.

Indeed, from the fact alone that the doctrine of Aquinas is approved merely as being safe and sound and that approbation is not given to others inconsistent with him, it is clear that these cannot be called equally safe and sound. John of St. Thomas writes:

To be approved for soundness of doctrine is the highest type of approval; though others may not be condemned or rejected, still this one is to be preferred. It would seem to be madness if the Church with great praises of many kinds extolls and approves St. Thomas' doctrine, and admits and approves as equal those which contradict it; thus she would destroy what she was building.³¹²

From this, one should not fly to the opposite extreme. Thus, those are in error by excess who do not obey the precepts of the Church:

1. *Those who deny all authority in other writers of the Church as if Thomas' authority excluded all other doctrinal*

³¹⁰ Letter to Fr. Velásquez, *loc. cit.*, 274-275.

³¹¹ Letter to Fr. Lottini, *loc. cit.*

³¹² *Tractatus de approbatione et auctoritate doctrinae angelicae Divi Thomae*, disp. I, a. 3 no. 23, ed. Solesm. *Cursus theol.* 248 b., Paris, 1931.

authority, and as if the Angelic Doctor were the only Doctor of the Church. This would be contrary to the doctrine of St. Thomas himself and contrary to his approbation by the Church.

Contrary to St. Thomas himself, who advises the student of wisdom:

Do not heed by whom a thing is said but rather what is said you should commit to your memory.³¹³

Moreover, no one by his own thinking can find out all that pertains to wisdom and therefore, no one is so wise that he cannot learn from another: ³¹⁴ and in this way, additions are made to knowledge. In the beginning a little bit was discovered, then, later through different people it began gradually to increase into a great quantity; for it is everyone's concern to add what was lacking in the preceding additions to knowledge.³¹⁵

He himself attributes great authority to Aristotle in philosophy and St. Augustine in theology, but he does not in any way exclude others. Of Thomas Cajetan says ³¹⁶ in a reference which Leo XIII used and approved, "because his veneration for the ancient and sacred Doctors was so great, he may be said to have gained a perfect understanding of them all." ³¹⁷

Contrary to his approbation by the Church, which expressly recognizes the authority of others. When we praise St. Thomas, Leo XIII said:

We do not disapprove, indeed, of those learned and able men who bring their learning and industry and the riches of new discoveries to the aid of philosophy: for We clearly see that such a course tends to the increase of learning.³¹⁸ Indeed, We declare that everything wisely said should be received with willing and glad mind, as well as everything by whomsoever profitably discovered and thought out.³¹⁹

Passing over the Fathers of the Church and the Doctors whose numbers daily increase and receive the approbation of

³¹³ *Opusculum de modo studendi.*

³¹⁴ *In Ps. 43*, no. I, *Opera Omnia* XVIII, 495, ed. Vives.

³¹⁵ *In I Ethicorum ad Nicomachum*, lect. II, n. 133.

³¹⁶ *Comment. in Summam Theol.*, II-II, q. 148, a. 4.

³¹⁷ *Aeterni Patris*, loc. cit., 62.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

authority in accord with their merits, we will mention only these words of Leo XIII:

It is a joyous thing to recall the fortunate period when there came out from the halls of the Theological Faculty of Paris, and in return poured forth on it the treasures of wisdom, such men as Peter Lombard, William of Paris, Albert the Great, Bonaventure, Giles and many others who illumined the whole world by the light of their learned wisdom. Because of their number it is necessary to pass over some of them, yet We must mention Thomas Aquinas whom the whole Church admires and respects as the most brilliant sun. *New Doctors should follow such distinguished leaders, and if they read their works, and especially if they embrace the doctrine of the Angelic Master and diligently teach and strenuously safeguard it*, we may hope that that pristine dignity and unique excellence will be recaptured by a great increase in studies and in Christianity itself.³²⁰

The brightness of the sun, the moon and the stars are all different, for star differs from star in brightness.³²¹ All shine but with different degrees of light. The more intense brightness of the sun does not blot out the lesser brightness of the other stars, but perfects them and renders them brighter. So the brilliance of the Aquinian Sun does not exclude the refulgence of other Doctors, but from the fact that he has perfected, explained and expanded their doctrine, he renders them brighter and more lustrous.

2. *They err by excess who consider that each and every element of the Thomistic doctrinal synthesis is of equal scientific or canonical authority, even though they be secondary and of less importance, or with no intrinsic relation to faith or morals.* As Pius X wrote:

It is clear that when We present Thomas as the chief guide for our scholastic philosophy, *We want this to be understood especially of his principles* upon which his philosophy is based as its foundation.³²³ For those which are the capital theses in the philosophy of

³²⁰ Letter on the founding of a Theological Faculty at the Catholic Institute of Paris, Dec. 10, 1889, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 236-237.

³²¹ *I Cor. XV, 41.*

³²² *Doctoris Angelici, loc. cit.* 337.

St. Thomas are not to be considered as debatable one way or another, but as the foundation upon which all knowledge of natural and divine things is based. If such principles are removed or in any way impaired, it necessarily follows that students of sacred sciences will fail to perceive even the meaning of the words in which divinely revealed dogmas are proposed by the Teaching Authority of the Church. We, therefore, desired that all teachers of philosophy and theology should be warned that if they deviated so much as a step, especially in metaphysics, from Aquinas, they exposed themselves to the greatest risk.³²³

Among such principles or major propositions in philosophy must be numbered the *twenty-four thomistic theses* which the Sacred Congregation of Studies declared “clearly contain the principles and major propositions of the holy Doctor.”³²⁴

Hence we have the words of Pius XII to students studying at Rome for the priesthood: “adopt freely whatever pertains clearly to it [the doctrine of St. Thomas] and finds a *solid basis* in it.”³²⁵

Again in the Encyclical *Humani Generis*: “In this philosophy many things are explained which neither directly nor indirectly touch faith or morals and which consequently the Church leaves to the free discussion of experts. But this does not hold for many other things, especially those principles and fundamental tenets to which We have just referred [the unshakable metaphysical principles of sufficient reason, causality, and finality].”³²⁶

At the same time we must keep in mind what he said to the teachers and students of the Universities and Schools of France who were visiting in Rome: “all the sciences have directly or indirectly some rapport with religion, not only theology, philosophy, history, literature, but even those other sciences in the juridical, medical, physical, natural, cosmological, paleontological and philological fields. The presumption that they include no positive relation to dogmatic and moral questions leaves

³²³ *Ibid.*, 338.

³²⁴ July 27, 1914, *loc. cit.*; March 7, 1916, *loc. cit.*

³²⁵ Discourse of May 24, 1939, *loc. cit.*

³²⁶ *Loc. cit.*, 572.

them open to the risk of finding themselves often in contradiction with such questions. It is necessary, then, that, even if the teaching of these sciences does not directly touch religious truth and conscience, the teacher himself should be well versed in religion, i. e., the Catholic religion.”³²⁷

And so, though every element in the Thomistic doctrinal synthesis is fully organized, connected and ordered, not every element has the same weight of firmness and authority. The fundamental principles upon which all the others depend and from which the rest flow, enjoy the greatest authority.

3. *They are equally in error by excess who exclude all freedom of thought, judgment, investigation and verbal expression of this doctrine as to its principles and major propositions, as if each and every one of these principles were imposed upon the mind for belief and assent.*

When the Sacred Congregation of Studies was asked if the twenty-four philosophical thomistic theses should be imposed upon and held by Catholic schools, it answered that they all contain and express the genuine doctrine of St. Thomas, but it did not say that they must be imposed upon Catholic schools and held by them. The Congregation said simply: “they should be proposed as safe directive norms,”³²⁸ “with no obligation being imposed of embracing all the theses,” as Benedict XV declared in a letter to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus on March 19, 1917. At the same time, he praised Fr. Hugon, O. P. for having made a commentary on the theses and placing their force and objective truth in a clear light; and to him the Pontiff reiterated, as he himself says, that “if he did not mean to impose them for interior assent, he demanded that they be proposed as the preferred doctrine of the Church.”³²⁹ And so they always remain greatly approved, praised and preferred to those which are inconsistent or opposed. These latter are merely permitted and tolerated, but the others are positively

³²⁷ Allocution of Sept. 21, 1950. *AAS* 42 (1950), 735.

³²⁸ Response of March 7, 1916, *loc. cit.*

³²⁹ *Les Vingt-quatre thèses thomistes*, p. VII. (Paris, 1922).

approved, praised and preferred, and *there is an obligation imposed to teach them in the schools as safe directive norms*. So, just as one would fail by excess if he should say that all are a matter of obligation in Catholic schools, so one would fail by defect should he say that all doctrines which are opposed or inconsistent are equally approved or considered to be of equal authority; as if the Church had manifested no preference for the theses of St. Thomas.

With respect to self-evident principles and immediate deductions from them to be approved for secular use and confirmed by the truths of faith, Pius XII says:

However, even in these fundamental questions we may clothe our philosophy in a more convenient and richer dress, make it more vigorous with a more effective terminology, divest it of certain scholastic aids found less useful, prudently enrich it with the fruits of the progress of the human mind. But we may never overthrow it, or contaminate it with false principles, or regard it as a great, but obsolete, relic. Truth and its philosophic expression cannot suffer daily change, least of all when there is a question of self-evident principles of the human mind, or of those propositions supported by the wisdom of the ages and by divine revelation.³³⁰

Catholic theologians and philosophers

should so speak by word of mouth or in writing to the men of their age that they may be intelligently and easily understood. It is inferred from this that in proposing and setting forth questions, in leading discussions, in choosing any form of speech, they should wisely accommodate their expression to the talent and inclination of their own age. *For what is unchangeable, let no one disturb or attempt to change.*³³¹

But if it should not happen to be a difficult matter, as experience and practice point out, its wisdom should be translated into the common idiom for laymen and through fuller explanation present technical ideas which are ordinarily obscure for those unskilled in theology.³³²

4. Finally, they err by excess who consider the doctrinal

³³⁰ *Humani generis*, loc. cit. 572.

³³¹ Allocation to the Jesuit General Congregation, loc. cit., 384-385.

³³² Allocation to the Dominican General Chapter, loc. cit., 388.

system of St. Thomas to be a closed book already enriched with every perfection so that neither the ideas nor words used to express them can be further developed. This, of course, is not human, because the human level is not capable of absolute perfection in its works. And it is not in accord with Thomas' own usual mode of action. He was continually developing, eliminating where necessary, and completing his doctrines and expressions, as can be seen in the autographs which are still preserved today, e. g. *Summa contra Gentiles*, *Commentarium in librum Boethii de Trinitate*, *Opusculum De rationibus fidei*. Furthermore, this notion is contrary to the mind of the Church which approves and praises his doctrine.

Pius X, following Leo XIII who heaped praises upon the doctrine of Thomas and commanded that it be followed and spread, recalled that Leo did not fail to recognize the advances in knowledge being made in our day and to urge the clergy to keep *au courant* so that they might discharge their office worthily. Pius himself roundly praised those who work:

to illustrate the opinions of Aquinas with learned commentaries, or develop his thought by the investigation of new points developed from his principles or weigh his findings in the light of more modern philosophy.

And he congratulated them,

because they help the genuine progress of philosophy to a great degree.³³³

The Sacred Congregation of Studies in its decree on the use of the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas as the text in Universities, Colleges, Seminaries and Institutes enjoying the power to grant degrees in Theology, is to be interpreted in this way: that,

together with some text indicating the logical order of questions and containing the positive part, the *Summa Theologica* should be used and explained for the scholastic part.³³⁴

³³³ Motu proprio *In praecipuis laudibus*, to the Roman Academy of St. Thomas, Jan. 23, 1904, cf. Berthier, *op. cit.*, 272.

³³⁴ March 7, 1916, *AAS loc. cit.*

It believed that even that great work of Aquinas needs the service and help of some other work pointing out the order of questions and containing positive theology.

Pius XII, after praising St. Thomas' doctrine, recalls the precept of the Code of Canon Law (can. 1366, 2) and himself adds:

We are not speaking now of those opinions and doctrinal formulas relating to physical or natural things, which in past times were proper and peculiar to their supporters, in that the discoveries of human knowledge in our age have surpassed and gone beyond these opinions. The Church favors these discoveries, is not at all opposed to them, and rather promotes than fears them.³³⁵

Rejecting these extremes and opposing interpretations, the *true and just interpretation of the validity of the doctrinal authority of St. Thomas and the obligation to accept it stands in the middle between these two extreme opinions*. The method, principles and philosophico-theological doctrinal synthesis of St. Thomas is to be held sacred by all and inviolably preserved,³³⁷

With assiduous effort search the books containing the institution, laws and history of religion. Weigh what is discovered with wise investigation and turn it to the use of sacred science,³³⁶

in such a way that it may be enriched by rightly and subsequently acquired truths, illustrated from research and historical investigations, and expanded by its application to new problems arising today. It does not deny freedom to investigate its genuine doctrine when its interpreters disagree, and indeed offers its support in leading the search for true knowledge, but not that which is false and specious.

The doctrine of Aquinas is so solid and firm in itself that it does not fear or avoid discussion and comparison with others. Rather, it invites such discussion and directs it along a safe

³³⁵ Allocution to the Dominican General Chapter, *loc. cit.*, 387.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 388.

³³⁷ CIC, can. 1366, 2; *Deus scientiarum Dominus*, art. 29; Pius XII, Discourse to Seminarians at Rome, *loc. cit.*; Allocution to the Dominican General Chapter, *loc. cit.*; *Humani Generis*, *loc. cit.*

path in the acquisition of truth. Thomas is not proposed for imitation in such a way that his followers and disciples may sleep and take their rest or be sluggish, but, imitating his work and industry, they should intensely apply all their energy in learning and expanding the truth. As Thomas himself says: "A man should employ every force within him as intensely as possible to strive towards divine things, that his intellect may be free for contemplation and his reason for the investigation of reality."³³⁸ And again: "the human mind should always be moved more and more intensely to know God according to its measure," i. e. as far as it possibly can.³³⁹

Leo XIII said:

Indeed, it seems that today too many mark genius by its aversion for antiquity. But the best method of philosophy is that which by thought finds new truths, and does not at the same time neglect the wisdom of the ancients:³⁴⁰ and We declare that everything wisely said should be received with willing and glad mind, as well as everything by whomsoever profitably discovered and thought out.³⁴¹

Pius XI said:

We desire that among lovers of St. Thomas, as all sons of the Church who are engaged in higher studies ought to be, there be honorable rivalry in a just and proper freedom which is the life blood of studies, but let no spirit of malevolent disparagement prevail among them, for any such, so far from helping truth, serves only to loosen the bonds of charity. Let everyone hold inviolable the prescription of the Code of Canon Law, that 'teachers shall treat the studies of philosophy and theology and train students therein according to the method, doctrine and principles of the Angelic Doctor, and religiously adhere thereto,' and all should obey this regulation in such a manner that they can truly call St. Thomas their teacher. And so that no one will require of others more than the Church, Mother and Teacher of all, demands, even in those matters which are disputed by more reputable authors in Catholic

³³⁸ *In Boethii de Trinitate*, q. 2, a. 1 c.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, ad 7.

³⁴⁰ Letter to L. Vives, *loc. cit.*

³⁴¹ *Aeterni Patris*, *loc. cit.*, 72.

schools, let none be prevented from following an opinion which seems to him to be closer to the truth.³⁴²

These famous words of the Pontiff which some frequently use and perhaps sometimes abuse, and which should be correctly understood and interpreted, come from previous utterances of his and are even found in the declarations of Pius XII. For the right and power resides within the jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiffs not only to interpret authentically their own laws, but even those established by their predecessors.

It is evident that Pius XI did not equate the doctrinal authority of other ecclesiastical writers with that of St. Thomas even in proved and established fields, let alone in controversial and disputed matters. In both fields the authority of Aquinas is always preeminent, though on controversial and disputed points it is not imposed with any internal force arising from the weight of its arguments, and assent consequently and quite reasonably is not required by the Church.

We have recounted above³⁴³ many of his words written and proclaimed after that Encyclical which established anew the obligation to follow Thomas in philosophy and theology. The result is that the doctrine of Aquinas should not be regulated by the opinions of others, but rather, other doctrines should follow his method, principles and doctrine.³⁴⁵ He highly praised and congratulated Cardinal Mercier for his philosophical works which show

how strong the perennial philosophy is, not only to unite with ancient wisdom what has been recently discovered by the praiseworthy work and brilliance of famous men, but to refute all errors so sharply opposed at present to right reason and the doctrine of the Church.

The Pope makes special mention of his Ontology:

³⁴² *Studiorum ducem*, *loc. cit.*, 323, 324.

³⁴³ Pp. 36-43; 68-71.

³⁴⁴ Apostolic Letter, *Officiorum omnium*, *loc. cit.*, confirmed in the Apostolic Letter *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, *loc. cit.*; Allocution to the professors and students of the "Angelicum," *loc. cit.*, 599-600.

Since you there support by illustration the principles of St. Thomas' metaphysics. *To withdraw from them, even slightly, will cause great harm, as Our predecessor of happy memory, Pius X, warned.*³⁴⁵

Thus he approved and adopted the words of Pius X. Since by the witness of the Church itself the twenty-four thomistic theses truly contain the principles and major propositions of St. Thomas in metaphysics, it clearly follows that to withdraw in the slightest from them will be a cause of great harm.

Pius XII has given the authentic interpretation of these words. He recognized a certain freedom *within the doctrine of St. Thomas and his school*, when he said that noted interpreters of Aquinas may dissent and dispute among themselves, but not against his certain and genuine doctrine.

These are his famous words:

Beloved sons, fill your hearts full of love and zeal for St. Thomas: strive with all your powers to understand his brilliant doctrine; freely embrace whatever clearly relates to his doctrine and finds safe support in it.

These precepts, already imposed by Our predecessor, We Ourselves bring forth and recall at present, and if any are not being followed they are to be restored in full vigor; at the same time We adopt the exhortations of Our predecessors by which they desired to protect progress in true science and real liberty in studies. We entirely approve and commend *the measuring, where necessary, of new discoveries in studies, with ancient wisdom. It is perfectly legitimate to investigate freely those matters upon which well-known interpreters of the Angelic Doctor usually dispute; new findings from history should be applied for fuller understanding of the texts of Aquinas.* No individual 'should act as if he were a master in the Church;' ³⁴⁶ nor 'should anyone require more from others than the Church, Mother and Teacher of all, demands;' ³⁴⁷ nor should foolish dissent be encouraged.

If all these points, as We trust, are followed, a fullsome increase may be expected from studies. *For, encouragement to spread truth, far from being suppressed by the doctrine of St. Thomas, is rather stimulated and safely directed.*³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ Letter of March 26, 1924, *loc. cit.*

³⁴⁶ Benedict XV, Encyclical *Ad Beatissimi*, Nov. 1, 1914, AAS 6 (1914), 576.

³⁴⁷ *Studiorum ducem*, *loc. cit.*

³⁴⁸ Discourse to the Seminarians at Rome, *loc. cit.*, 246-247.

We should not pass over those words making Thomas, in a way, like the Church. Recalling his Encyclical *Humani generis* to the scholars meeting at Rome for the Third International Thomistic Congress he said:

This encyclical letter *represents a safe path* to you who are discussing and interpreting, *with the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas leading you like the brightest Sun.*³⁴⁹

Indeed, encouragement in seeking and spreading truth is not suppressed but rather stimulated and safely directed by the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas, as by the encyclicals of the Roman Pontiff.

He adds, further, that though it is true

that the Pontiffs generally allow freedom to theologians on matters which are disputed in various ways by men of great reputation, still history teaches that many matters that were formerly open to free discussion no longer now admit of discussion.³⁵⁰

So, today, after so many approbations, commendations and precepts by the Church, no Catholic is free to deny the matchless doctrinal authority of St. Thomas, whose teaching in philosophy and theology, amidst all that surround it, not only outside but also within the Church, she prefers and praises over others: “justly favored by the Church.”³⁵¹

God has raised up the Angelic Doctor in the Church to communicate his salutary and solid doctrine and to light it up like the Sun. His wisdom, especially commended to all, is admired by the whole world.³⁵²

Truly, “among the Scholastic Doctors, *Thomas Aquinas stands eminently as the prince and master of them all,*”³⁵³

³⁴⁹ *Loc. cit.*

³⁵⁰ *Humani generis*, *loc. cit.*, 568.

³⁵¹ Letter of adherence to the Roman Pontiff by the Lateran Athenaeum in Rome on the occasion of his Encyclical *Humani generis*, Nov. 9, 1950, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 90 (1950), no. 271, Nov. 19, 1950, p. 1, col. 5.

³⁵² Pius XII in the Preface of the Mass of St. Thomas Aquinas according to the rite of the Order of Preachers, composed by the Pope himself.

³⁵³ *Aeterni Patris*, *loc. cit.*, 62.

whose doctrine is not only safer and more solid than the rest, but even more in accord with the teaching of the Church,³⁵⁴ and therefore teachers should clearly point out his soundness and excellence in Catholic schools.³⁵⁵ In the judgment of the Church, “it is praiseworthy to follow Thomas”;³⁵⁶ “to depart foolishly and rashly from him is fraught with great peril”;³⁵⁷ to depart from Aquinas even slightly especially in metaphysics and theology, will cause great harm;³⁵⁸ not to depart from his discipline even in the slightest is the highest praise,³⁵⁹ and a security preventing any danger of wandering from the rule of Christian truth.³⁶⁰ In a word, the slightest digression from Aquinas is neither permitted nor tolerated; but the Church urges and strongly praises fidelity in following him, even in minor matters.

So, the Order of Preachers, which retains the doctrine of Thomas as its most precious treasure and regards it as sacred and inviolable,³⁶¹ puts this great fidelity together with the encouragement and freedom to seek and explain truth, in the form of law:

Following the example of so great a doctor and leaning upon him as upon a solid rock, our professors and writers should take care to follow with docility and reverence in the footsteps of the doctrinal tradition of the Church and our Order. This does not at all conflict with the legitimate academic freedom of investigating, judging, and resolving current or ancient questions with impartial consideration. From any suitable and approved source means may

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

³⁵⁶ Leo XIII, Letter to Bishop Haine, *loc. cit.*

³⁵⁷ *Idem*, Letter to the Minister General O.F.M., *loc. cit.*

³⁵⁸ Pius X, *Praeclara*, *loc. cit.*, 335; *Doctoris Angelici*, *loc. cit.*, 338; Pius XI, Letter to Cardinal Mercier, *loc. cit.*, 227.

³⁵⁹ Benedict XV, Letter to Fr. L. Theissling, *loc. cit.*, 397, “And to this Order [of Preachers] must be awarded the tribute that it not only nourished the Angelic Doctor, but also that never afterwards did it deviate from his doctrine in the slightest”; Pius XI, *Studiorum ducem*, *loc. cit.*, 324.

³⁶⁰ Pius X, Letter to Fr. Valásquez, *loc. cit.*; *Praeclara*, *loc. cit.*, 334.

³⁶¹ Acts of the General Chapter, Rome, Sept. 21-30, 1946, no. 68 (Rome, 1946) p. 57.

be adopted more safely to find the truth which is from God, to assimilate it more fully, to develop it more fruitfully, keeping in mind the exhortation of our most Holy Father, Pius XII, to the Fathers at the preceding chapter: 'whatever truth our times bring forth, weigh it with impartial investigation, and turn it to the use of sacred science.' 'Encouragement to seek and spread truth is not at all suppressed by the doctrine of St. Thomas, but is rather stimulated and safely directed.'³⁶²

This freedom, especially in matters recently under discussion and consideration, should be carefully and prudently used, lest the false be accepted for the true and the shadow for the substance. As Pius XII says, professors teaching philosophy and theology in Catholic schools,

in regard to new questions which modern culture and progress have brought to the forefront, should submit them to careful research, but with the necessary prudence and caution . . . They should not think, indulging in a false eirenism, that the dissident and erring can happily be brought back to the bosom of the Church, if the whole truth found in the Church is not sincerely taught to all without any corruption or diminution.³⁶³

The Pontiff is grieved to note that some indulge in these novelties without sufficient examination and approbation. They seem to be influenced by this reason, "lest we be unaware of the knowledge which recent progressive research has brought forth,"³⁶⁴ which is the way it appears to intellectuals of the modern stamp. And what is more serious, this affects priests with a zeal and an itch for novelty and many of these priests seem to be

less equipped than others with learning and doctrine and austerity of life.

Novelty itself is never a criterion of truth, and it can be praise-

³⁶² Acts of the General Chapter, Washington, Sept. 18-24, 1949, no. 59 (Rome, 1950), p. 53-54.

³⁶³ *Humani generis*, loc. cit., 578; 564-565: Instruction of the Congregation of the Holy Office to local Ordinaries *de motione oecumenica*, Dec. 20, 1949, AAS 42 (1950) 142-147.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 564.

worthy only when at the same time it confirms the truth and leads to virtue and probity of life. What has made its appearance in our time has wandered very far from the true path: philosophical systems which are born and die without improving morals in any way.³⁶⁵

In the same way,

much is said, but hardly weighed on the scale of reason, about the 'new theology' which is always changing along with all other things; it is always about to reach but never quite arrives at its goal. If such opinions should be embraced, what will become of changeless Catholic dogmas and the unity and stability of the faith?

While you continue, therefore, to reverence and regard as sacred and serious the never-failing Truth, have regard for the studious investigation and solution of problems which arise with the times, especially if they beget obstacles and difficulties for the learned faithful. By your explanation of these problems, thereby changing a difficulty into a help, strengthen their faith.

When new and debatable questions arise, let the principles of Catholic doctrine stand out in your minds; when some novelty arises in theology, let it be weighed with vigilant caution. Distinguish solid and certain doctrine from that which is merely conjecture, and from that which a fallible and not always laudable practice can introduce and use even in theology and philosophy. Offer a friendly hand to those in error but lend no ear to erroneous opinions.³⁶⁶

Among the doctrines proposed as novel mention must be made of the denial or at least the doubt of the possibility that human reason without the help of revelation and grace can prove the existence of a personal God by arguments drawn from the created universe; the denial that the world had a beginning; the affirmation that creation of the world is necessary in that it proceeds from the necessary liberality of divine love; the denial of God's eternal and infallible foreknowledge of the free actions of man; the denial of the transmission of original sin from the one Adam to all other men descending from him

³⁶⁵ *Menti Nostrae, loc. cit.*, 694.

³⁶⁶ Allocution to the Jesuit General Congregation, *loc. cit.*, 385.

through natural generation, the Virgin Mary alone being excepted by a special privilege of God, the denial being the asserted theory of polygenism; the perversion of the Catholic doctrine of sin as an offense against God, and of the satisfaction offered for us by Christ; the corruption of the doctrine of the free elevation of human nature to the supernatural order, as if God could not create beings with an intellect and yet not order and call them to the beatific vision; the denial of transubstantiation and of the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, as though they should be reduced to pure and simple symbolism; the grave and positive doubt whether angels are personal beings and whether matter and spirit differ essentially; the acceptance without any discretion of the philosophical doctrine of existentialism and evolutionism; and many exegetical aberrations as well. All these points Pius XII condemned in this Encyclical *Humani Generis*, and other recent documents, and decreed that they are forbidden in Catholic Schools.³⁶⁷

There are some who interpret this moderate and rightful manner of following St. Thomas in this fashion: what the Angelic Doctor did for his age and what he would do for our age if he were living, is what his modern Thomist disciples should do.

This statement, if correctly understood, is true. If taken in the sense, as many do, that Thomas adopted the philosophy of his time, i. e. the peripatetic, for the service of Theology, and accordingly, if he lived now, he would adopt the philosophies which surround us, such as idealism, immanentism, existentialism and the rest, then the statement must be pronounced entirely false. He did not take Aristotelian philosophy as it was, nor as interpreted by Greek, Jewish and Arab commentators, but as purified and developed and expanded and greatly enriched by Christian philosophers, especially by his

³⁶⁷ *Humani generis*, loc. cit., 568-571, 573-574, 576-578; *Menti Nostrae*, loc. cit., 688; Discourse to the Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops and other local ordinaries at Rome for the solemn definition of the Assumption, Nov. 2, 1950, AAS 42 (1950), 791; Allocution to the delegates at the General Congress of all Religious Orders, Congregations, Societies and Secular Institutes, Dec. 8, 1950. AAS 43 (1951) 32, 34.

teacher, St. Albert the Great, and most especially by himself. He worked very industriously and suffered many calumnies. In his time and at the same University of Paris there were some, the so-called Averroists, who without discretion or prudent caution accepted some philosophical doctrines from Aristotle or from his expositors, which contradicted divinely revealed truth. These denied the personal immortality of the human soul or at least laid the foundation for the doctrine of the active intellect entirely incompatible with the personal immortality of the soul.

The holy Doctor directly alludes to them in a sermon probably delivered in July 1270 before the University of Paris in which he said:

There are some who study philosophy and say things which are not true according to the faith. And when they are informed that what they said contradicts the faith, they state that Aristotle said it, but they, far from asserting the same, merely repeat the words of Aristotle. Such a one is a false prophet or a false teacher because it amounts to the same thing to raise a doubt and not to solve it, as to concede it. This is pointed out in *Exodus* (21 :33-34) when it says that if a man open a pit and dig a cistern and cover it not, and the neighbor's ox comes and falls into the cistern, the one who opened the cistern is bound to restitution. He opens a cistern who raises a doubt pertaining to the faith. He does not cover the cistern who does not solve the doubt, though he happens to have a clear and capable mind and is not liable to error. But someone else who does not have such a clear mind is easily deceived, and the one who raised the doubt is held to restitution, because through his fault someone fell into the ditch.

See how many philosophers there were and how much they had to say about things pertaining to the faith, yet you can hardly find two to agree on one opinion, and even those who do say something true do not say it without some mixture of error. A little old man may know more about his faith than all the philosophers before him.

We read that Pythagoras was at first a boxer. He heard a teacher arguing on the immortality of the soul and declaring that the soul was immortal. He was so affected that he put everything aside and took up the study of Philosophy. What ordinary person is

there today who does not know that the soul is immortal? *Faith has a much wider extension than philosophy. So, if philosophy contradicts the faith, it must not be accepted.*³⁶⁸

Leo XIII, admiring the great work and labor of St. Thomas, wrote:

This is numbered among the great benefits which the Church owes to the great Aquinas, that he so beautifully harmonized Christian theology with the peripatetic philosophy then popular, that we have Aristotle fighting for Christ and no longer an adversary.³⁶⁹

By this purification and elevation joined with multiple additions from the neo-Platonists and St. Augustine and the Arabs, and especially from his own work and effort, by which he joined all those fragments of truth into one body and raised it to a higher and more perfect synthesis, peripatetic philosophy was entirely altered, but its system and method of philosophy was preserved. Indeed, as Martin Grabmann says: "the work of the ages more enduring than bronze which Aquinas accomplished was his synthesis of Augustine and Aristotle."³⁷⁰ Yet, he far surpassed both of them and established with one impulse a superior doctrinal synthesis fully philosophical and fully Christian: "a Christian philosophy in the full sense of the word, without ceasing to be a philosophy in the full sense of the word," to use the words of Etienne Gilson.³⁷¹

Rather, therefore, than taking this or that philosophy, as peripatetic or academic, Stoic or Arabian, he took for the use of theology and the service of the faith, the truths of the natural order sought after by the continuous labor and effort of human reason. These truths constitute the *perennial philosophy* or *common sense* philosophy as Benedict XV calls it,³⁷²

³⁶⁸ *S. Thomae Aquinatis et S. Bonaventurae Balneoregiensis sermones anecdoti*, ed. P. Uccelli, p. 71. (Modena, 1879).

³⁶⁹ *Brief Gravissime nos.*, *loc. cit.*, 247.

³⁷⁰ "De quaestione 'Utrum aliquid possit esse simul creditum et scitum' inter scholas augustinismi et aristotelico-thomismi medii aevi agitata," in *Acta hebdomadae augustinianae-thomisticae*, 139. Rome, 1931.

³⁷¹ "L'idée de Philosophie chez Saint Augustin et chez Saint Thomas," in the same *Acta*, 84.

³⁷² Letter to Cardinal Schulte, *loc. cit.*, 423.

i. e., *the philosophy without qualification*.³⁷³ He would not use but would entirely reject the many false philosophies which surround us today, as immanentism, existentialism, materialistic or agnostic philosophy, in that they are incompatible with the truths of faith and contrary to right reason. Fr. Schultes says:

There can be a possible expurgation in Aristotelian philosophy of the errors which are accidental. Aristotle can be corrected from his own fundamental principles. But the errors present in modern philosophy are so fundamental that they cannot be corrected. This philosophy must be entirely rejected and expunged.³⁷⁴

Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange adds:

They say moreover that the modern philosophical systems ought to be baptized as St. Thomas baptized Aristotelianism. For that, two things would be necessary. It would be necessary first to possess the genius of St. Thomas, and then the modern philosophical systems would have to be baptizable. To be baptizable a soul is necessary. A system which reposes entirely on a false principle cannot be baptized.³⁷⁵

But if one understands how he acted towards the philosophers of his time and how he would act towards modern philosophers if he were now living, then the statement is true. He proceeded very cautiously and prudently with the philosophers of his own and previous times, treating them with great understanding, yet most precisely distinguishing the true from the false in their writings so as to take the truth and reject error.

In this matter he was no respecter of persons but of reality, for he was a unique lover and cultivator of truth. Fame, fortune or opportunism failed to touch or affect him, but with a calm and serene spirit he thoroughly weighed all things and judged them from the height of eternal principles. He always fortified

³⁷³ Cf. above pp. 3-9.

³⁷⁴ *De Ecclesia Catholica*, 726. (Paris, 1925)

³⁷⁵ "La structure de l'Encyclique *Humani generis*," in *Angelicum*, 28 (1951), 9-10. Cf. also A. Perego, S. J., "La Nuova Teologia. Sguardo d'insieme alla luce dell' Enciclica *Humani generis*," in *Divus Thomas* Pl., 53 (1950), 442-443.

himself with the reading of spiritual books, so as not to lose devotion from delving into the philosophers.³⁷⁶

Without any doubt, Aristotle and the Jewish, Arabian and Latin philosophers of his time were much less dangerous than modern philosophers in that all of them admitted the first and fundamental principles of a healthy and perennial philosophy, which many of the moderns reject.

He would proceed much more cautiously and prudently with modern philosophers if he lived now. How thoroughly he would investigate and prudently weigh the novelties of our time; how unhesitatingly he would accept those which were tried and approved; how eagerly he would accept the chance from others to investigate more deeply and proceed more cautiously; he would always take encouragement from all to ascend to higher and better things. There is no doubt that he would follow the admonitions and cautions which Pius XII declared must be maintained with reference to proposing new doctrines openly or counterfeitedly, and he would keep them to the letter.

The true cultivation of St. Thomas, according to reality and the recommendation of the Church, consists in holding sacred and inviolate his method, principles and doctrine in philosophy and theology, and imitating at the same time his scientific, intellectual and moral qualities, as well as cultivating them, and manfully expressing them in the life of his disciples, so that Thomas continues to live in them completely, especially according to the spirit.

His discipline is not hard or tyrannical but sweet and human, yet prudent and firm. With how much modesty, consideration and simplicity he proposes his doctrines that his readers may mull them over and convince themselves. There is so much order in his exposition together with brevity, and so much clarity does he pour out along with profundity of ideas and propriety of speech, that he fully convinces the sincere mind. Frequently

³⁷⁶ Cf. his *Comment. in I de Anima*, lect. 2, no. 30; in *II Metaph.*, lect. I, nis, 287-288; in *III Metaph.*, lect. I, no. 342; in *XII Metaph.*, lect. 9, no. 2566; in *I Ethic.*, lect. II, nis. 132-133; in *II Ethic.*, lect. I no. 246; in *Psalm. 43*, no. 1; *de Veritate*, q. 16, a 2c; *de Tocco, Vita S. Thomae*, cap. 21.

meeting with him never engenders aversion but rather promotes a continually new admiration for him. He inspires security of mind and joy in finding the truth, and at the same time he stimulates one's capacity and directs it safely in the search after new truths with free and bold spirit. As Leo XIII said: "Far from draining the power of the mind, he feeds it lasting and salutary food."³⁷⁷

With evident right, therefore, from the supreme intrinsic value of St. Thomas' doctrine, and from the most special approbation and commendation of the Church, we may conclude with J. de Guibert, S. J.:

By the very fact of anyone embracing the doctrine of St. Thomas, he embraces the doctrine most commonly accepted in the Church, safe and approved by the Church itself . . . ; when there is no grave contrary reason, the authority of St. Thomas suffices to prefer his opinion.³⁷⁸

This is not only true in theology to which he solely refers, but in philosophy as well; for there is one and the same force and approbation for both.

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³⁷⁷ *Gravissime nos, loc. cit.*, 246.

³⁷⁸ *De Ecclesia Christi*, 386. (Rome, 1928).